

**"In soft Complaints no longer Ease I find":
Poetic Configurations of Melancholy
by Early Eighteenth-Century Women Poets.**

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Introduction

In 1701, the poet Anne Finch anonymously published what would become one of the best-known early eighteenth-century poems about melancholy: “The Spleen. A Pindarick Ode.”² In various ways, this poem is representative of its time as well as of the subject of this study. Finch’s “Spleen” seizes a highly fashionable topic and thus represents a prime literary example of the so-called “age of melancholy.”³ Moreover, it also encompasses the phenomenon in its discursive heterogeneity and its poetic configurations. Above all, however, “The Spleen” offers an insight into the construction of a poetic self through the emotional and aesthetic ‘melancholy experience’.⁴

The poem delivers an almost clinical account of the spleen, a term which served as a popular synonym of melancholy in the early eighteenth century.⁵ As readers, we are confronted with the social and cultural implications of melancholy during a time in which England appears as a nation of eccentric ‘splenetics’, of real as well as imagined sufferers, of men and women, who are all burdened by the spleen to various degrees and forms.⁶ Apart from this social and collective dimension, the

¹ In the following, the terms melancholy and melancholia are used interchangeably following Jennifer Radden’s (2000) argument regarding their historical indistinct usage (see vii). Moreover, throughout this study I use a specific terminology of melancholy standard to the field.

² The poem was first published in Charles Gildon’s *A new Miscellany of Original Poems on Several Occasions*, and only appeared under Finch’s name in 1713. All poems analysed in this study are found the Appendix, here, p. 275.

³ Moore (1953), p. 179. Moore’s verdict of the eighteenth century as an era of melancholy is emphasised by John F. Sena, whose *Bibliography of Melancholy 1660-1800* (1970) documents the multitude of literary as well as non-literary texts about melancholy during this period. Although Sena’s criteria for selecting texts remain obscure, his book serves as an useful indicator, but not an exhaustive source.

⁴ The term ‘melancholy experience’ features largely in the recent compendium *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century. Before Depression, 1660-1800* (2011). In their “Introduction”, Allan Ingram and Stuart Sim describe this term with respect to depression, while their understanding of “experience” remains vague. They state: “[...] we share [...] [the] implied view that the experience of depression is what counts, and therefore those conditions, social, cultural, religious and scientific, that encroach on the experience in different periods of our history, and for us most notably the long eighteenth century, are demanding of attention insofar as they help to shape how depression is suffered and survived, how it is treated, or engaged with, or indeed stigmatized, and how people’s views of it are expressed” (2). In this study, ‘melancholy experience’ constitutes both an important part of the ‘melancholic self’ and a specific framework, which structures individual emotions. For a more detailed discussion of the melancholic self and the melancholy experience, see chap. 2.1, p. 83.

⁵ See Meek (2009), p. 105.

⁶ The poem’s diverse angles offer a multitude of different readings and approaches. The wealth of research on Finch’s poetry reflects this diversity. Thus, the following selection of secondary sources is indicative of the different ways in which Finch’s “Spleen” has been critically appraised in recent times. Traditionally, the poem has been read as an example of the intersection of medical and literary writings, e.g. by Sena (1971) and Rogers (1989). Additionally, revisionary feminist readings dominate the research on Finch’s poetry, that characterises “The Spleen” as an expression of the poet’s deeply rooted ambiguity of being a woman with literary and hence ‘masculine’ ambitions,

poem also presents the melancholy disorder as a subjective and individual(ising) experience, and as a means of poetic self-construction:

O'er me alas! thou [i.e. the spleen, S.B.] dost too much prevail:
 I feel thy Force, whilst I against thee rail;
 I feel my Verse decay, and my cramp'd Numbers fail.
 Thro' thy black Jaundice I all Objects see,
 As Dark, and Terrible as Thee,
 My Lines decry'd, and my Employment thought
 An useless Folly, or presumptuous Fault:
 Whilst in the *Muses* Paths I stray,
 Whilst in their Groves, and by their secret Springs
 My Hand delights to trace unusual Things,
 And deviates from the known, and common way; (v. 73-83)

Central to the poem, the female persona not only states the alleged decay and failure of her verses,⁷ but captures melancholy's paradoxical nature of profound despair, mental paralysis, and poetic inspiration. The melancholic self that emerges from these experiences has a highly ambivalent stance towards melancholy by both simultaneously resisting and revelling in it.

Within the scope of this study, Finch's "Spleen" is 'symptomatic' of the close relationship between medicine and literature (as the poet's contemporaries had also observed⁸), which is highly characteristic of the eighteenth century.⁹ As such it

in a society in which "the feminine was itself the substance of a disease that plagued systems of order" (Salvaggio (1988), p. 124). Linked to this idea are cross-over studies of Finch's biography and poetic works, for example the critical biography of Finch by McGovern (1992) and Hinnant (1994). For a gender-critical reading, see Desiree Hellegers's "The Threatening Angel and the Speaking Ass': The Masculine Mismeasure of Madness in Anne Finch's" (1993). In recent years, Finch's "Spleen" has been increasingly read as a social and feminist critique of being a woman, which transforms nervous disorders into 'sociosomatic' disorders. Such a reading is usually corroborated by a selection of life-writing texts which present Finch as a sufferer of melancholy, see e.g. Meek (2009) and Harrison (2011). More recently, Emig (2010) reads Finch's poem as an attempt "to fill the newly created space of feminine creativity" (105), homosocial structures (see 103) and the shift of melancholy towards a feminised disorder at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Barney (2010) finally discusses Finch's "Spleen" against the background of art history, eighteenth-century medicine and theories of the sublime.

⁷ As Baker (2011) states in this context: "The obvious paradox, as in all poetic accounts of depression or melancholy that have seen the light of day, is that the lines the reader is reading are proof of Finch's own victory and that of her poetry, despite the fact that she openly acknowledges her defeat" (93).

⁸ Most famously, Dr. William Stukeley reprinted Finch's poem and Matthew Green's poem *The Spleen* as part of the preface of his medical treatise *Of the Spleen, Its Description and History, Uses and Diseases, Particularly the Vapours, with Their Remedy* (1723) and claimed to have inserted the poems "to help out my own description of the disease" (7). Critics like Hinnant (1994), however, emphasise the purely decorative function of Finch's poem in this context (see 225).

⁹ G.S. Rousseau (1969) closely interlinks the relationship of medicine and literature of the eighteenth century with the discovery of the imagination as "a real essence, as material in substance as any other part of the body" (109) that could be therefore medically described. Against this background, "[s]cience and literature were perhaps never closer in their ultimate aims than in the century (1680-1780) that discovered imagination" (109). For a detailed discussion of the different levels on which medicine and literature intersect, e.g. the influence of medicine on literature and *vice versa*, the position of the poet-physician, and the impact of biography, see Rousseau (1981), Rousseau ("Medicine and the Muses", 1993), Neve (1993) as well as the works of

marks the numerous entanglements to be found at this time between the sciences and the arts: the literary expression of a physio-psychological disorder, the social critique on physicians, and the overlapping connotations that 'art' had in terms of medicine and literature. Above all, it is equally 'symptomatic' of the gender shift within the discourses of melancholy, as it was a woman poet who published one of the most popular melancholy poems at a time when this literary tradition was clearly dominated by male writers.¹⁰

Research Proposition, Argument, and Aim

Finch's "Spleen" operates within a greater epistemological shift during which both melancholy and the perception of women as melancholics underwent a radical change. This study aims at demonstrating how melancholy as a medical, social, and cultural construct was increasingly feminised and diversified during the long eighteenth century.¹¹ This process ultimately led to the development of a new 'melancholic femininity'. During its course, women moved from the margins of melancholy's various discourses towards their centre, a relocation whose medical and cultural repercussions are still clearly evident in today's debates on the gendering of depression.¹²

the medical historian Roy Porter, e.g. (ed. with Marie Mulvey Roberts) *Literature and Medicine during the Eighteenth Century* (1993). In her article "Literatur und Medizin im 18. Jahrhundert: von der erneuten Forschungskritik bis zum 'Medical Writing'" (2006), Sandra Pott not only presents us with current research issues within the field, but also introduces prominent approaches and new areas yet to be researched.

¹⁰ See Backscheider (2008), p. 73 and McGovern (1992), p. 159. John Duncombe's description of Finch in his famous poem *The Femiinad* (1754) shows that "The Spleen" was by then already perceived as her "signature poem" (Backscheider (2008), p. 73) in contrast to her later nature poems: "Who can unmov'd hear WINCHILSEA reveal / Thy horrors, Spleen! which all, who paint, must feel? / My praises would but wrong her sterlin wit, / Since Pope himself applauds what she has writ" (ll. 121-124). Duncombe's text is a compelling poetic document about the women poets' visibility and position in the first decades of the eighteenth century. In 1774, Mary Scott's *The Female Advocate, a Poem, occasioned by reading Mr Duncombe's Femiinead* was not only inspired by Duncombe's celebratory poem but also sought "to console a melancholy female mind" by emphasising "women's achievement in Britain" (Ballaster (2010), p. 240).

¹¹ In this study, the 'long eighteenth century' is defined by the dates that are used to capture the transformation of melancholy. Thus, it begins ca. 1680 with the implementation of the nervous paradigm and closes with the publication of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* between 1794-97. It follows the development of a melancholic femininity as will be discussed later.

¹² The relationship between melancholy and (clinical) depression, a medical concept of the late nineteenth century, has been widely discussed in recent years. For the heavily overlapping history of melancholy and modern depression, see George S. Rousseau, "Depression's forgotten Genealogy. Notes towards a History of Depression" (2000) and Clark Lawlor, *From Melancholia To Prozac. A History of Depression* (2012). For an overview of the topic with regards to the eighteenth century, see Allen Ingram et al., *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century. Before Depression, 1660-1800* (2011); for a gender-related discussion, see G.J. Barker-Benfield: "Mary Wollstonecraft's Depression and Diagnosis: The Relation Between Sensibility and Women's

The question presents itself as to why, by 1750, the perception of female melancholics rapidly transforms from their being rarely afflicted to being 'prime sufferers'. Analogously, it needs to be asked why eighteenth-century women writers increasingly explore melancholy both as a literary topic and as a viable means of poetic self-construction, (although this new melancholic femininity was still closely associated with a pathological understanding of melancholy). It is intended to examine the literary manifestations and appropriations of melancholy by Augustan women poets during the course of this change. The research focus of this thesis rests on the poetic self-constructions of women writers through melancholy from ca. 1680 to 1750. I place this focus in relation to the greater epistemological shift. This temporal frame correlates with the fundamental scientific shift from the humours to the nerves around 1680,¹³ which co-initiated processes like the feminization and diversification of melancholy as a nervous disorder.

Moreover, the nervous paradigm provided the physiological foundations of the emerging culture of sensibility,¹⁴ in which melancholy became a fashionable, albeit ambivalent phenomenon. The emergence of sensibility enhanced the cultural evaluation of femininity and formed another major factor in the changing perception of women as melancholics and as melancholic writers. By 1750, both the implementation of the nervous system as well as of sensibility as a dominant cultural and literary movement had been accomplished and had led to the development of a new melancholic femininity.¹⁵ By this I mean a discursive configuration based on the structural similarities between melancholy and eighteenth-century notions of femininity. Here, mutual physio-psychological traits such as weak nerves, irrationality, and excessive fits of passion reciprocally reinforced conceptions of both melancholy and conceptions of femininity. In the

Susceptibility to Nervous Disorders" (1985) and Jennifer Radden's essay collection *Moody Minds Distempered. Essays on Melancholy and Depression* (2009). Recently, Harrison (2011) has summarised this debate and has related it to the eighteenth century, see pp. 18-23.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the system of the four humours, see Introduction, p. 10.

¹⁴ For the theory of nerves as one of the major components of the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, see Janet Todd (1986), G.S. Rousseau (1975/2004), Barker-Benfield (1992). For a discussion of the time frame of Sensibility, see Frye (1956), p. 144.

¹⁵ The term "melancholic femininity" has also been used by Lawlor (2006) in a similar sense to mine. Within gender studies, the term refers to "melancholy gender" (coined by Judith Butler), which denotes the disavowed grief for the lost same-sex object of desire that comes as the price for developing a stable, heterosexual gender identity. For the discussion of "melancholy gender", see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990/1999), pp. 73-84 and *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* (1997), esp. chap. 5. For a critical discussion of Butler's concept, see Wald (2007).

course of the long eighteenth century this cultural evaluation gained in esteem and prestige.

Against this background, I will argue that the complex processes of feminization and diversification of melancholy were accompanied by an increased interest in melancholy as a literary *sujet* and as a means of poetic self-construction. The preoccupation Augustan women poets had with melancholy and its literary tradition becomes evident in a remarkable number of poems that aestheticise the melancholy experience and offer spaces for alternative forms of 'poetic-melancholic' selves.

These poems impart a notable degree of ambiguity towards the established literary tradition of melancholy. They vary in their compliance to common definitions of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry as pensive, meditative, and introspective,¹⁶ and they deliver unexpected and ambiguous poetic configurations. They prepare the foundation for an early notion of a melancholic femininity, which would fully manifest itself in the poetry of professional Romantic women writers such as Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson.

This study is a critical contribution to the history and poetology of eighteenth-century female writings on melancholy. Its (ultimate) aim is to remap the development of female melancholy poetry preceding the great wave of sentimental poetry launched with the publication of Thomas Gray's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard* in 1751.¹⁷ This undertaking seems all the more important since it takes into account poems that have not previously been studied as melancholic *per se*, such as texts that aestheticise the melancholy experience on subtextual levels, where the emotional crisis might be prevalent, but not transformed into the standard repertoire of melancholic imagery. Until recently, the this kind of poems did not figure as melancholic, a fact which underlines the necessity for a thorough rethinking and recasting of our understanding and reading expectations of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry.

¹⁶ See Sitter (2012), p. 134. Sitter further defines the eighteenth-century melancholy poetry as metapoetic and, above all, vocational (see 133ff.).

¹⁷ See Reed (1924), p. 1f. First published as a quarto in 1751 by the highly influential bookseller, editor, and writer Robert Dodsley, Gray's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard* was published in various literary magazines and anthologies (see Lonsdale (1969), p. 112.). In the following, I refer to the poem's version in *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse* (ed. Roger Lonsdale (1984)).

Melancholy and Gender

Against the backdrop of the popular assumption of melancholy as being related to femininity,¹⁸ melancholy was actually understood as a predominantly male phenomenon – especially regarding the culturally privileged tradition of the melancholic genius. Seminal research, often furnished with an interdisciplinary and comparatist approach, such as Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl (1964), Babb (1951), Lepenies (1969), and Schings (1977) do not provide an explicit focus on the gendering of melancholy.¹⁹ However, highly influential current research projects such as “Before Depression, 1660-1800”²⁰ and related publications²¹ have started to consider gender as being an important aspect in the construction of melancholy. In the context of this recent research project, Pauline Harrison’s doctoral thesis

¹⁸ This idea is usually driven by the (mis-)interpretation of female allegorical representations of melancholy in the fine arts such as Albrecht Dürer’s famous etching *Melencolia I* (1514) or Lucas Cranach’s *Melancholy* (1532) as can be observed in Sander L. Gilman’s discussion of the gendering of allegories in *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (1988).

¹⁹ Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl’s study *Saturn and Melancholy* (1964/1979) is still the most comprehensive introduction to melancholy from antiquity to early modernity. Lawrence Babb’s *The Elizabethan Malady* (1951) interrelates early modern medical discourses of melancholy with literary studies, and provides an early typology of dramatic and social types of melancholics. Wolf Lepenies’s study *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (1969/1998) explains eighteenth-century melancholy as a malady of the budding middle classes in terms sociological thinking. His compensation-argument hinges on the idea of a bourgeois melancholy as an affective and social reaction of the increasingly self-conscious middle classes to their exclusion from political power. This resulted in a bourgeois isolation, resignation, solitude, and *ennui*, but also in sensibility, interiority, and exalted love of nature (see 80). Hans-Jürgen Schings’s *Melancholie und Aufklärung: Melancholiker und ihre Kritiker in Erfahrungsseelenkunde und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1977) introduces melancholy as an historical, literary, medical-psychological, and above all anthropological category of the Enlightenment. Focussing on melancholy’s anthropological aspect, Schings fans out a detailed typology of melancholy in an enlightened society with its specifically ‘anti-melancholic’ tenets such as rationality and optimism. Hartmut Böhme’s cultural historical account of eighteenth-century melancholy “Kritik der Melancholie und Melancholie der Kritik” (1988) successfully contextualises Schings’s study.

²⁰ See <http://www.beforedepression.com/index.htm>; last visit 1 Feb. 2013.

²¹ Recent research has been significantly influenced by the nexus of depression and melancholy. The interdisciplinary project “Before Depression, 1660-1800” (2006-2009) focused on fictional and life-writing texts of the long eighteenth century in order to explore depression’s pre-nineteenth century cultural, medical, and literary manifestations. As part of this project, there have been several publications relevant for this study: In the all-encompassing compendium *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century* (2011), by Allan Ingram et al., various authors illuminate immanent aspects of eighteenth-century melancholy always in relation to depression. The two volumes of *The Representation and Culture of Depression (1660-1800)* (2010) intersect with current research on the various ramifications of melancholy (the question of gender is included merely in two essays). Finally, the four-volume collection of primary sources *Depression and Melancholy, 1660-1800* (2012) covers religious, medical, autobiographical, and literary writings on melancholy and certainly provides an immensely useful source of primary texts for further research. Surprisingly, although these publications acknowledge the category of gender as relevant in this context, they do not follow these questions into further detail. Further publications deriving from this project are Clark Lawlor’s *From Melancholia to Prozac* (2012) and Diane Buie, *Melancholy and the Idle Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (2010). At a conference in the course of the project, Hobby delivered an excellent keynote lecture about religious melancholy in post-conversional autobiographical texts of women with the title “‘As melancholy as a sick Parrot’. Depressed (?) Women at the Beginning of the Long Eighteenth Century” (2008).

Depression and Gender: The Expression and Experience of Melancholy in the Eighteenth Century (2011) has attempted “to redress the balance [between male and female eighteenth-century writers suffering from depression; S.B.] by giving special consideration to women’s experiences and the ways in which they chose to express depression in their writing.”²² To this end, Harrison links the personal and literary writings of six writers of that period²³ to reveal the psychological, social, cultural, and, to some extent, literary aspects of the kinds of depression the respective writers suffered. By contrast, this study predominantly focuses on the literary configurations of and self-constitutions through melancholy in the poetry of Augustan women writers, and hence seeks to combine medical, literary, and theoretical ideas about eighteenth-century melancholy and gender.

The question of the conception, perception, and participation of women in the various discourses of melancholy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has increasingly been discussed in gender-focused research of the recent decades. Especially, Juliana Schiesari’s study *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (1992) has been significant in initiating this trend. The study proposes the immanent asymmetrical gender conceptions of melancholy as valorizing the emotional grief of men as melancholy and disparaging women’s sadness as mourning. Strongly informed by her psychoanalytical-poststructural approach, Schiesari argues that

[...] the ‘grievous’ suffering of the melancholic artist is a gendered one, an eroticized nostalgia that recuperates loss in the name of an imaginary unity that also gives to the melancholic *man* (the *homo melancholicus*) a privileged position within literary, philosophical, and artistic canons. [...] At the same time, such an impressive translation of lack seems persistently denied to women, whose association with loss or grief is expressed by less flattering allusions to widow’s weed, inarticulate weeping, or other signs of ritualistic (but intellectually and artistically unaccredited) mourning.²⁴

Hence, the absence of women in the discourses of melancholy, according to Schiesari, does not point to a lack of “unhappy women [...] [but] to the lack of significance traditionally given to women’s grief in patriarchal culture.”²⁵ In other words, while men advance to melancholic genius that highlights their intellectual

²² Harrison (2011), p. 1. Harrison’s thesis has been published online and can be downloaded under <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/4454/>; last visit 3 Mar. 2013.

²³ In particular, these are Thomas Gray, Robert Fergusson, Anne Finch, Mary Wortley Montagu, Sarah Scott, and Charlotte Smith.

²⁴ Schiesari (1992), p. 11f.

²⁵ Schiesari (1992), p. 3.

and artistic exceptionality, women turn into nameless case studies of hysteria, madness, and depression in medical and psychiatric treatises.²⁶

Schiesari's almost transhistorical concept²⁷ has since been challenged by various critics of early modern literature.²⁸ This is hardly surprising considering the ongoing interest in the process of retrieving texts by early modern and eighteenth-century women writers.²⁹ Furthermore, in the context of the paradigmatic changes of melancholy during the long eighteenth century, women's poetic and autobiographical expressions of melancholy have gained critical attention.³⁰ Focusing on the interaction of medical, biographical, and poetic expressions of melancholy, Meek questions Schiesari's notion of women's omission, and explores the possible relationships between hysteria (as a medical, cultural, and literary construct), and eighteenth-century women writers.³¹ She reads eighteenth-century

²⁶ This process of valorisation and devaluation is ultimately reciprocal, since the male-connoted privileged form of melancholy has "its source of empowerment in the *devaluing* of the historical reality of women's disempowerment" (Schiesari (1992), p. 12), and a ritualistic, culturally debased form of female mourning. I shall draw back on Schiesari's argument in more detail in chap. 4.1, which will also include my critique on her idea (see 176).

²⁷ "Transhistorical" insofar as Schiesari believes her argument to be salient for the "great age of melancholy," i.e. from the Renaissance to the postmodern eras – in other words, from Ficino to Freud – which she considers intrinsically linked to the rise and fall of "'the subject' as the organizing principle of knowledge and power" (2).

²⁸ See for instance, Helen Hackett, "'A book, and solitariness': Melancholia, Gender and Literary Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's *Urania*" (1998); Sarah E. Skwire, "Women, Writers, Sufferers: Anne Conway and An Collins" (1999); Rainer Emig, "Competing Melancholies. (En-)Gendering Discourses of Selfhood in Early Modern English Literature" (2006); Katherine Hodgkin, *Madness in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography* (2007); Anne C. Vila, "'Ambiguous Beings': Marginality, Melancholy, and the *Femme Savante*" (2007); Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (2008); Sabine Blackmore, "Matchless and yet Melancholy? Weibliche Melancholie in den Gedichten von Katherine Philips" (2009); Gabriele Rippl, "Mourning and Melancholia in England and its Transatlantic Colonies: Examples of Seventeenth-Century Female Appropriations" (2011). Before Schiesari's 'gender turn of melancholy', John F. Sena's articles "Melancholy in Anne Finch and Elizabeth Carter. The Ambivalence of an Idea" (1971) and "Belinda's Hysteria: The Medical Context of *The Rape of the Lock*" (1979) have shown that women took an exceptional position within the discourses of melancholy, although Sena did not explicitly focused on it.

²⁹ For the still on-going retrieving process of eighteenth-century texts by women writers, see e.g. Isobel Grundy's article "(Re)Discovering Women's Text" (2000).

³⁰ Studies on literary representations of melancholy in the eighteenth century are often concerned with the emergence of the sentimental novel, see most notably, John Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability. The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (1990). In terms of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, research is still dominated by two seminal, but rather dated studies: Amy Reed's *The Background of Gray's Elegy. A Study in the Taste for Melancholy Poetry 1700-1751* (1924) and Eleanor M. Sickles's *The Gloomy Egoist. Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats* (1932). Although these works impress with the sheer quantity of included poems and through the comprehensive poetic landscape of melancholy they create during the long eighteenth century, they both fail to identify the problematic standing of women writers within this tradition.

³¹ "Medical Women and Hysterical Doctors. Interpreting Hysteria's Symptoms in Eighteenth-Century Britain" (2008), "Of Wandering Wombs and Wrongs of Women: Evolving Conceptions of Hysteria in the Age of Reason" (2009), "'[W]hat Fatigues We Fine Ladies Are Fated to Endure': Sociosomatic Hysteria as a Female 'English Malady'" (2011), "Creative Hysteria and the Intellectual Woman of Feeling" (2011).

female melancholic texts as a form of social critique – or “sociosomatic” disorder³² – of women’s conditions in the patriarchal system. For women writers such as Anne Finch, Mary Wortley Montague, Elizabeth Carter, and Hester Thrale Piozzi, hysteria becomes a means of protest and of intellectual empowerment.³³ In contrast to Meek’s biographically informed approach,³⁴ this study follows a more text-based approach, and in so doing, renders the problem of biography³⁵ less relevant.

The notorious underrepresentation of melancholy poetry is also discernible in the wider context of research on eighteenth-century women writers.³⁶ Among the seminal publications of women’s literary historiography,³⁷ melancholy is usually not identified as a popular literary *sujet* and is hence neglected in critical discussions. By contrast, Paula R. Backscheider considers, but then explicitly rejects the idea of female melancholic writing preceding Charlotte Smith in her comprehensive study *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry* (2008). Although she generally argues that “women were writing everything men were,”³⁸

³² Meek (“Sociosomatic Hysteria”, 2011), p. 377.

³³ See Meek (“Creative Hysteria”, 2011), p. 89.

³⁴ Collective biographies of women such as George Ballard’s *Memoirs of Several Ladies* (1752), *Biographium faemineum* (1766) and Mary Hays’s *Female Biography* (1803) show that – besides Anne Finch (see chap. 3.2, p. 125) and Mehetable Wright (see chap. 4.2, p. 220) – the women poets featured in this study were usually not considered melancholic. Quite the contrary, hints or suspicions of melancholy were diffused and re-interpreted as a virtue rather than a potential moral or character flaw (see for instance, the biographical construction of Elizabeth Singer Rowe as pious rather than suffering from religious melancholy, and the construction of Mary Leapor as “happy pauper” (Kord (2003), p. 56.) rather than ‘mopish’; both biographies are further discussed in chap. 3.2, p. 133 and p. 157). Generally, I briefly introduce the analyses of the poems by some biographical information. Women writers, who I consider less known, are introduced in more detail.

³⁵ As Lonsdale (1969) defines: “The ‘biographical’ problem is, of course, whether or not such connections between the poet’s life and contemporary events on the one hand, and the poem itself on the other, can or need to be made” (108).

³⁶ For an historical-critical survey of literary criticism on eighteenth-century women writings from the late seventeenth century to present day, see Ros Ballaster’s article “Critical Review” (2010). For the current debate on female models of authorship and the increasing professionalization of women writers in the course of the century, see e.g. Sarah Prescott’s *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (2003), Kirsten Juhas’s *‘I’ll to my self, and to my muse be true’: Strategies of Self-Authorization in Eighteenth-Century Women Poetry* (2008) and Betty Schellenberg’s *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2005). For anthologies of eighteenth-century women’s verse, see most notably Roger Lonsdale’s pioneer anthology *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989), as well as Paula R. Backscheider’s and Catherine E. Ingrassia’s most comprehensive *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Anthology* (2009). For contextualisations of eighteenth-century women writers, see *Women and Poetry, 1660-1750* (2003), edited by Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton, who successfully combine individual women writers of the period as well as the wider contexts and poetic practices of these women. For a wider contextualisation of enlightened women writers, see the essay collection *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (2007) edited by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor.

³⁷ Such as Margaret Ezell’s highly influential *Writing Women’s Literary History* (1993) or Susan Staves’s more recent *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (2006/2010).

³⁸ Backscheider (2008), p. xxii.

Backscheider clearly discharges women poets from appropriating melancholy.³⁹ Throughout her study it becomes clear that her notion of literary melancholy corresponds to the restricted mid-eighteenth-century sense epitomised by Gray's "Elegy", and is strongly influenced by Schiesari's idea of melancholy's gendering.⁴⁰ In the following chapters, I shall question such a restricted approach to literary melancholy in Augustan women's poetry, creating a more differentiated and refined picture of women's contributions and ambivalences towards this literary tradition, and extending our ideas of melancholy as a category of medicine and literature, and, above all, of gender.

Women and Melancholy before 1680

The systematic marginalisation of women within the discourses of melancholy prior to 1680 is based on the conceptualisation of sex and gender in the two originary traditions of melancholy: the medical and the philosophical. One of the most influential premises for women's marginalisation rested on the medical assumption that women were much less afflicted by melancholy than men, yet if "misaffected [they; S.B.] are far more violent, and grievously troubled."⁴¹ The reasons for this were seen in the gender-specific mixture of the humours, which formed the basis of the Western tradition of medicine.⁴² The system of the four humours – i.e. blood, yellow bile, black bile,⁴³ and phlegm –, first established in the Hippocratic work *Nature on Man* (ca. 400 BC), was paramount for the medical conception of sickness and health, and for the correlation between man and macrocosm. Attached to the four elements (air, fire, earth, water) and associated to the qualities (hot, dry, cold, moist), the four humours provided an individual

³⁹ As Backscheider (2008) claims: "The greatest contrasts between men's and women's retreat poems are that women's are neither solitary, melancholy, nor especially steeped in sensibility" (241).

⁴⁰ See Backscheider (2008), p. 277.

⁴¹ Burton (1621/2001), pt. I, p. 172. That this dictum was already salient in ancient Greek medical thinking, see Flashar (1966), p. 94. For the descriptions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century medical practice concerning melancholic women, see Michael MacDonald (1981), Barbara Duden (1987).

⁴² For medical-historical and cultural introductions to the doctrine of the four humours, see most prominently Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), Flashar (1966), Jackson (1986). More recently, Noga Arikha (2007) has provided an excellent and truly enjoyable history of the humours.

⁴³ Black bile was only established as the fourth humour in this particular treatise. For the problem of evidence and composition of black bile and its conspicuous position within the scheme of the four humours, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), pp. 3-15; see also chap. 2, p. 78.

mixture (*crasis*) for every human being.⁴⁴ According to medical lore this mixture was usually already dominated by one particular humour (and subsequently element and quality), which not only pointed to a particular field of disorders to which this person was naturally prone, but would also define a specific natural aptitude, and temperament (i.e. sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic) in the centuries to come.⁴⁵ Hence, melancholy was considered not only in terms of a pathology, but also as a natural inclination and finally, a specific temperament.

Sickness and health were believed to be strictly a matter of balance, and whereas a healthy person would enjoy a balanced composition of fluids, an imbalance or surfeit (or lack) of one particular humour would lead to disease.

Highly sensitive to internal and external factors, the mismanagement of the so-called six non-naturals – i.e. air, diet, sleep, and wakefulness, rest and motion, evacuation and repletion, and, above all, the passions of the mind – proved a major source of the pathogenesis of many diseases arising from the imbalance of the humours.⁴⁶ A surplus of cold and dry black bile would engender melancholy – a disorder which covered a multitude of psychological and physical symptoms such as causeless sadness, fear, anxiety, discontent, hallucinations, and headaches, sleeplessness, indigestion, palpitations of the heart etc.⁴⁷ Thus bridging body and mind, melancholy afflicted the entire human being and was usually also understood as a form of madness, next to frenzy and mania.⁴⁸

Analogous to the individual humoral complexion, the sexes were bound to a specific mixture of humours which determined and underscored both their apparent physical nature as well as intellectual abilities: while men were considered hot and dry, women were believed to be generally cold and moist (hence associated with phlegm and water).⁴⁹ The importance of the gendering of

⁴⁴ In the course of the centuries, the system of the humours was gradually extended by seasons, human ages, star signs, etc. For a more detailed diagram of the humoral system, see Appendix, p. 278.

⁴⁵ For melancholy as a part of the system of the four temperaments, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), pp. 97-123.

⁴⁶ For an introduction to the history and meaning of the six non-naturals, see L.J. Rather, "The 'Six Things Non-Natural': A Note on the Origins and Fate of a Doctrine and a Phrase" (1968), and Jackson (1986), p. 11f.

⁴⁷ The most exhaustive catalogue of melancholy's symptoms can be found in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621/2001), pt. I, pp. 382-396.

⁴⁸ In chap. 1, I will specifically discuss seventeenth-century humoral notions of melancholy, its symptoms, causes, and cures in more detail (see 24). For a discussion of the eighteenth-century debate on the problem of body and mind, see L.J. Rather (1965).

⁴⁹ For a comprehensive overview of the humoral, physiological and psychological construction of women before 1680, see Maclean (1980), esp. chap. 3. After Rufus of Ephesus (see Flashar (1966), p.

the humours can hardly be overestimated for the pre-scientific and cultural constructions of both femininity and female sexuality.

In combination with other exclusively physical characteristics such as the female reproductive system, women were consequently considered prone to a range of uterine disorders such as hysteria and chlorosis. In turn, uterine disorders were believed to be responsible for women's alleged lack of rationality and vehemence of passions and emotions.⁵⁰ The naturalisation of women's allegedly innate bodily and mental weakness justified their inferior status in society and the further pathologisation of the female sex.⁵¹

Women's exclusion from the philosophical tradition of melancholy triggered its apotheosis as the precondition of male intellectual and artistic superiority and genius. Or, in Radden's words: "The category of genius had no more place for women than had the category of melancholy."⁵²

The idea of the (male) melancholic genius was primarily established by the canonical pseudo-Aristotelian text "Problem XXX, I." Blended with elements of the Platonic concept of frenzy, as well as of medical ideas of melancholy,⁵³ the text sets forth with the crucial question: "Why is it that all men who have become

39), it is the German medieval abbess Hildegard of Bingen who introduces the gendering of melancholy in her medical treatise *Causae et Curae* (1151-58) (see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 111 and Schiesari (1992), p. 142). In tune with humoral notions of body and mind combined with Christian doctrines, Hildegard constructs melancholy as a direct consequence of the fall of mankind (see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 79 and Obermüller (1974), p. 15). Thus, she does not idealise melancholy as a precondition of intellectual excellence, but conceptualises it as a severe affliction for both sexes. Both body and mind of female melancholics are marked by the surplus of black bile. Their faces show tinges of black hue, their flesh is meagre and their veins strong and thickly filled with black bile as well as blood. Analogously, their character is erratic, mopish, and gloomy (see Hildegard of Bingen (1982), p. 139). Similar to early modern descriptions of female melancholy, Hildegard considers the female reproductive system as central to it. According to Hildegard, female melancholics suffer not only from a sexual reluctance, but are mostly infertile due to their weak uterus and their specific cold-wet complexion in humoral terms (see 139). In order to keep female sufferers of melancholy as healthy and happy as possible, Hildegard suggests a life of celibacy preferably in a convent (see 139f.).

⁵⁰ See Maclean (1980), p. 41f.

⁵¹ For discussion of the pathologisation of the female sex, see Esther Fischer Homberger, *Krankheit Frau und andere Arbeiten zur Medizingeschichte der Frau* (1979), Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture 1830-1980* (1987), Sander L. Gilman et al., *Hysteria beyond Freud* (1993), Laurinda Dixon, *Perilous Chastity. Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment* (1995), Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (2004), and Katharine Hodgkin, *Madness in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography* (2007).

⁵² Radden (2000), p. 40. This is one of the points that have been fiercely criticised by feminist theorists of melancholy like Schiesari. For a feminist discussion of the gender-gap in the concepts of genius, see Battersby (1989). For an overview of the eighteenth-century notions of genius, see Fabian (1978).

⁵³ For the detailed discussion of the text's philosophical and medical influences, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), pp. 15-18 and Noel Brann, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius during the Italian Renaissance* (2002), esp. chap. 1.

outstanding in philosophy, statemanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic?"⁵⁴ From the very start, the text explicitly asks for the reasons for an apparently valid observation, and develops the idea of melancholy as the premise for artistic and intellectual exceptionality. This serves as a mechanism of exclusion, since the melancholic genius is bound to two preconditions: firstly, melancholy needs to be based on a natural or innate predominance of black bile, and secondly, it needs to be well-tempered. Since this is a volatile state, the pseudo-Aristotelian melancholic genius is constantly threatened to suffer from severe depression (if the black bile is too cold) or to become mad (if too hot).

The notion of the melancholic genius prevalent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was significantly influenced by the writings of the Florentine humanist and neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino. He had revived and further glorified the pseudo-Aristotelian concept by unifying parts of the Platonic idea of the *furor divinus*, neoplatonism, astrology, and magic, and interpreting melancholy as both a blessing and a curse for the social and intellectual elite of his time.⁵⁵ This paved the way for further cultural appropriations of melancholy as a desirable and fashionable malady.⁵⁶ Hence, melancholy became a distinction for the socially and culturally privileged who flaunted it as a sign of their allegedly heightened state of sensitivity, and their intellectual as well as artistic abilities. Whether featuring as the early modern *malcontent* or the hypersensitive 'man of feeling' of the eighteenth century,⁵⁷ melancholy provided social and cultural framework, operating above all as a mechanism of exclusion on the grounds of natural philosophy, gender, and class.⁵⁸

Besides the medical and philosophical discourses, the literary tradition – or poetic melancholy – forms another influential strand of the various discourses of melancholy and developed in the late Middle Ages.⁵⁹ Poetic melancholy buttressed

⁵⁴ Aristotle (ca. 350 BC/1965), p. 154. The ancient Greek text explicitly refers at this point to ἄνδρες, i.e. "men" in contrast to "women" and not to ἄνθρωποι as in "man" in contrast to beasts (For the meanings and connotations of ἀνὴρ, see LSJ 138 s.v. ἀνὴρ I.)

⁵⁵ See Dixon (1995), p. 198.

⁵⁶ For the significance of Ficino's *De vita libri tres* (1489) for the early modern conception of melancholy as source of artistic inspiration and intellectual genius, see Brann (2002), esp. chap. 2, Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), pp. 254-274 and, above all, the excellent and exhaustive introduction to Ficino's *Three Books on Life* (1989) by Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark, pp. 3-91.

⁵⁷ See Babb (1951), p. 75ff., and Barker-Benfield (1992), pp. 247-250.

⁵⁸ For an overview of the interrelations of medicine, class, and gender of this type of melancholy, see Lawlor, "Fashionable Melancholy" (2011).

⁵⁹ See Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 217-228. For a more detailed discussion of the usage of melancholy in late medieval poetry, esp. in the works of the French poet Charles d'Orléans, see

the long-lasting cultural significance of melancholy and extended its reach far beyond the pre-scientific and philosophical sphere. Based on Robert Burton's verdict as a "transitory melancholy disposition,"⁶⁰ poetic melancholy is predominantly defined as a subjective and pensive mood which exists independently from the medical and philosophical discourses, albeit its strong interrelatedness.⁶¹ The transformation of melancholy from a pathological disposition (and temperament) towards both a transient and positively connoted emotional state, and an aesthetically imbued experience lead to a wider dissemination, but also dilution of the concept. At the same time, this process enhanced melancholy's cultural and literary dominance.⁶²

At the core of literary melancholy lies an increasing self-awareness of the (poetic) self as

a double-edged feeling constantly providing its own nourishment, in which the soul enjoys its own loneliness, but this very pleasure becomes again more conscious of its solitude [...]. This modern melancholy mood is essentially an enhanced self-awareness, since the ego is the pivot round which the sphere of joy and grief revolves [...].⁶³

The continuous revolving around the self, that increases both one's pleasure but also one's suffering, becomes an important trademark of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century melancholy poetry.⁶⁴ In contrast to contemporary feminist

Karlheinz Stierle, "Trauer der Stimme, Melancholie der Schrift. Zur lyrischen Struktur des Rondeau bei Charles d'Orléans" (1995).

⁶⁰ Contrary to the positive connotation of poetic melancholy, Burton only reluctantly recognises this kind of melancholy as part of the concept. Since anybody would fall prey to a transitory state of melancholy sooner or later, melancholy would lose its exclusive character and would turn into a common emotional state thereby contradicting Burton's notion of an ennobled melancholy.

⁶¹ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 217f.

⁶² Although the wide field of melancholy connotations of both disease and temperament was still intact, the new understanding of melancholy as a passing, subjective mood overlies older and more traditional meanings especially beyond the (pre-)scientific discourses: "But, except in scientific literature, the traditional usage tended more and more towards the subjective and transitory meaning, until at length it was so overshadowed by the new 'poetic' conception that this last became the normal meaning in modern thought and speech" (Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 218).

⁶³ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 231.

⁶⁴ For the beginnings of the literary tradition of melancholy and especially for its seventeenth-century manifestations, see most seminally Klibansky et al. (1964/1979). Lawrence Babb's study *The Elizabethan Malady. A Study of Melancholia in English Literature 1580 to 1642* (1951) has served as the groundwork for the reading of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature and its various melancholic types such as the 'malcontent' against the background of physiological foundations of Elizabethan psychology, especially in terms of melancholy. Bridget Gellert Lyons's *Voices of Melancholy. Studies in literary treatment of Melancholy in Renaissance England* (1971) focuses more strongly on the transformation of melancholy as a pre-scientific phenomenon into a literary one and its usages in seventeenth-century literature. Most recently, *The Literature of Melancholia: Early Modern to Postmodern* (2011), edited by Martin Middeke and Christina Wald, follows the changing appropriations of melancholy – as an aesthetic as well as theoretical category – in the literature from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.

critical opinion,⁶⁵ I shall demonstrate that although this tradition was predominantly male, women poets grappled with melancholy poetry in an ambiguous but productive manner.

Terminology and Methodology

As I shall argue for a more differentiated and dynamic understanding, the definition of melancholy used in this study is accordingly broad. Generally, I follow Martin Middeke and Christina Wald in their argument that melancholy

always emanates from (or, in some cases, is accompanied by) a sense of loss. This sense of loss [...] might be the response to a sense of absence or lack, a deep-rooted, often unaccountable craving or a yearning for something more different or other; [...]. No matter whether it relates to religion or philosophy, medicine or psychology, literature or the visual arts, this sense of loss may surface as a sense of nostalgia for a better cultural or individual past, a loss of balance, visible in a surplus of black bile [...]; a loss of interest in the outer world; [...]; the loss of a beloved object or even the ability to love; a loss of self-esteem or of self-respect resulting in self-reproach or in the conviction of being irremediably guilty [...].⁶⁶

Characterised by the far-reaching sense of loss, that is paradoxically closely related to the idea of a surplus (e.g. of black bile), melancholy needs to be considered a highly ambivalent and physio-psychologically complex, as well as culturally determined construct, operating within the fields of history, medicine, philosophy, and the arts. The social and cultural values attributed to melancholy greatly vary according to different (social) categories such as gender or class.⁶⁷

Melancholy's immanent heterogeneity also has to be considered with respect to the aesthetic melancholy experience. This 'aestheticisation' is significant regarding melancholy poetry by early eighteenth-century women writers. Due to the discursive gendering of melancholy, the repertoire of feminine melancholic subjectivities was for many centuries limited to pathologised or marginalised identities. Women writers appropriated the melancholy experience with much

⁶⁵ See Backscheider (2008), p. 242.

⁶⁶ Middeke and Wald (2011), p. 3.

⁶⁷ McKeon's article "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760" (1995) embeds sex and gender difference in the eighteenth-century history of patriarchy and rising capitalism. He aptly describes how the process of class formation "led women (and men) who aspired to a proto-'bourgeois' gentility to value idleness in women" (299). Idleness, in turn, becomes one of the major causes of neurotic disorders (such as melancholy and hysteria) of the genteel 'lady of leisure'. As Ehrenreich and English (1973/2011) have pointed out, idleness of the upper-class women served both as "the social ornament that proved a man's success" (48) as well as an important foundation stone of the fashionable "Cult of Female Invalidism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see 49-58). In her recent PhD-Thesis *Melancholy and the Idle Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (2010), Diana Buie focuses on the link between idleness, melancholy, and depression in life-writing texts by Samuel Johnson, William Shenstone, and William Cowper.

greater variety and ambivalence than discursive constructions (whether medical, philosophical or literary) of melancholic femininity suggest at the beginning of the long eighteenth century.

This study aligns itself to an understanding of the social and cultural category of gender as encapsulated by Dror Wahrman's idea of the "potential porousness of the boundaries of gender" throughout the "short eighteenth century," i.e. until 1780.⁶⁸ Wahrman argues that although social and cultural expectations of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' were generally clearly defined, "contemporaries did not perceive them as necessarily pinning down each and every individual, and could readily be found to react to an apparent subversion of these expectations [...] with resignation, tolerance, or sometimes even appreciation."⁶⁹ By this he means that although eighteenth-century sex had already achieved a certain rigidity in the oppositional construction of male and female (as Thomas Laqueur has notably suggested⁷⁰), gender notions of the short eighteenth century were still fluid and dynamic enough to include both normative and counter-normative gender performances.⁷¹

The fluidity and permeability of gender around 1700 is also immensely important for the idea of the 'self' that is used in this study. In the multiple attempts to establish a salient notion of the 'modern self', whose emergence is commonly associated with the eighteenth century,⁷² I shall emphasise traits of 'the self' which are pivotal to my usage of the term. It is generally agreed that the self is

⁶⁸ Wahrman (2006), p. 35. See also Wahrman (2008), p. 592. Since the 1980s the category of gender is used with regards to femininities and masculinities. In this study, I usually refer to femininities when mentioning gender.

⁶⁹ Wahrman (2006), p. 40.

⁷⁰ The idea of a melancholic femininity is inevitably linked to the changing understanding of 'woman' both in biological and socio-cultural terms. Thomas Laqueur's seminal hypothesis in *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1992) of the gradual emergence of the two-sex model opposes the one-sex model in which the female body appeared as the aberrant version of one sex: the male (26). He presents male and female bodies not only as "opposite and incommensurable biological sexes" (154) but also as the foundation for both: the medical construction of a generally corrupt and nervous female body, and for gender difference (152; see also McKeon (1995), p. 301). For a summary of the critique on Laqueur, see Wahrman (2008), pp. 590-596.

⁷¹ See Wahrman (2006), p. 43.

⁷² For the different aspects of the history of the emergence of the modern self in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, e.g. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980); Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self* (1997); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (1989); Hans Robert Jauß, "Vom Plurale tantum der Charaktere zum Singulare tantum des Individuums" (1994); Dror Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self* (2006); and Christoph Bode, *Selbst-Begründungen. Diskursive Konstruktionen von Identität in der britischen Romantik* (2008).

designated by a very particular sense of a personal core.⁷³ This core is significantly characterised by interiority or “inwardness”, as Charles Taylor calls it,⁷⁴ as the constant reflection upon itself and the quest for one’s personal identity. As Taylor does not provide a specific gender-perspective, I shall link Wahrman’s conception of gender to melancholy and further add to the multi-faceted notion of the self. In the analyses of the poems, I examine the literary strategies in which the poems’ personae reflect upon themselves and their melancholy experience, i.e. using melancholy as a means of a gendered poetic self-construction.

In the course of this study, I will delineate two ‘types’ of self-construction (prevalent in the poems of chapter three and four). Firstly, I will establish a ‘poetic-melancholic self’ derived from Taylor’s notion of Locke’s “punctual self” which is ‘radically disengaged’,⁷⁵ as I shall argue in more detail in chapter two, and which reflects upon itself through the melancholy experience.⁷⁶ Moreover, I will show that the ‘melancholic self’ is implemented as a characteristic feature of literary melancholy texts. In terms of gender, the ‘melancholic self’ is generally informed by the repertoire of predominantly male subjectivities such as the scholar, poet, and lover⁷⁷ as they were constructed through the medical, philosophical and literary discourses of melancholy. Female melancholic selves, by contrast, were mainly restricted to pathologising conceptions of women as erratic, fickle, and irrational. The female ‘poetic-melancholic’ selves, I shall discuss, present alternative forms in the light of a new melancholic femininity.⁷⁸

The second type of poetic self-construction primarily recurs to women’s social roles and ties as mother, daughter, and wife, and other normative gender expectations. I shall call this type ‘relational-melancholic’ self, since it constitutes itself through both its socially predetermined roles and relations, as well as the

⁷³ See Greenblatt (1980), Taylor (1989) and Wahrman (2006).

⁷⁴ See Taylor (1989), p. x.

⁷⁵ The phrase ‘radical disengagement’ refers to Taylor (1989), p. 171.

⁷⁶ The concept of experience plays an important role in Locke’s empiricism and in the constitution of a consciousness about one’s self, as Margaret A. Doody (2000) points out (see 227). In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke differentiates between two kinds of experiences. The first kind, which he calls sensations, helps to understand the external world; the second kind, i.e. reflection or “that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding” (Book 2, chap. 1, p. 38). Thus, Locke provides an external sense of the world (through sensation) and an internal sense of reflection that makes us understand mental processes. Ideas, or knowledge, are gained through both.

⁷⁷ For the most common early modern male melancholic subjectivities, see Appendix, p. 279.

⁷⁸ These feminine melancholic selves could be regarded as ‘counter-normative’ in so far as they do not refer to a predetermined discursive pattern, but express a certain resistance or ambivalence towards the commonly forms of masculine melancholic subjectivities.

experience of melancholy in the poetic text.⁷⁹ As I shall further argue in chapter four, these ‘relational-melancholic’ selves form an important aspect of the developing melancholic femininity, since they combine culturally established gender constructions (such as the mother) with melancholic subjectivities, e.g. the melancholic poet. In the melancholy texts of Romantic women poets, this combination of culturally accepted gender performances in combination with the melancholic poet becomes immensely productive and both culturally and, ultimately, economically successful.

In terms of methodology, this study is strongly informed by a cultural historical approach to literary criticism, as it combines the readings of medical texts about and literary expressions of melancholy.⁸⁰ I will specify cultural and literary meanings in the light of the just evolving melancholic femininity at the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁸¹ Besides the cultural and literary diversity of meanings (both literary as well as non-literary) in terms of melancholy, this approach is rather productive in terms of the study’s interest in the changing perceptions of women and melancholy as well as in the specific eighteenth-century relationship between medicine and literature,⁸² long before the separation of the “two cultures”, i.e. the sciences and the humanities. Although the majority of the poems analysed in this study do not relate directly to the medical discourse of melancholy, they still harbour the medical beliefs of their day and derive aestheticised imagery from the non-literary discourses, as will be further discussed in chapter two.

Adopting a discourse-analytical approach, to some extent, enables a sharper focus on the constructedness of melancholy – as a medical as well as socio-cultural and literary phenomenon – in combination with the construction of the female sex and feminine gender. Moreover, it provides the tools to describe the ways in which knowledge about melancholy and gender are produced and naturalised against an

⁷⁹ For the discussion of maternity as the increasingly dominant constituent of eighteenth-century feminine identities, see Wahrman (2006), p. 12ff.

⁸⁰ I position my study in Laura Brown’s and Felicity Nussbaum’s research direction of the *New Eighteenth Century Studies* (1987). This well-established direction not only emphasises the relevance of transdisciplinary works and approaches in eighteenth-century literary and cultural studies (see 7), but specifically encourages the “revision or problematisation of period, canon, tradition, and genre in eighteenth century studies [...]” (14).

⁸¹ My understanding of cultural history follows Catherine Belsey (1989), whose approach is influenced by both New Historicism as well as cultural materialism, however critically assessed. By cultural history she proposes “a story of conflicting interests, of heroic refusals, of textual uncertainties. It tells of power, but of power which always entails the possibility of resistance, in so far as it inevitably requires a differentiating other” (164).

⁸² See above, FN 7.

early eighteenth-century background.⁸³ By analysing several overlapping and interrelated discourses, I attempt to illuminate the dynamic correlations of medicine and literature highlighting the melancholy performance of literary texts as a significant discursive statement.⁸⁴ I will also examine the reciprocal discursive constructions of melancholy and femininity, which both overlap with the wider medical discourse.

This discussion will reveal the discursive rules of inclusion and exclusion from eighteenth-century ideas of melancholic femininity, while revealing subtle shifts in the literary construction of melancholic femininity through the close reading of the selected poems. These poems are not judged by their aesthetic quality, but rather display exemplary literary strategies in dealing with melancholy.⁸⁵ This means that although some of the poems are quite conventional in terms of their literariness, they still serve as apt examples of specific ambivalences to melancholy. In so doing, they provide different forms of female melancholic selves, which contribute to the accretion of a literary melancholic femininity.

⁸³ My notion of discourse analysis follows Landwehr (2010). He summarises: “[...] discourse analysis assumes a constructed nature of socio-cultural realities and interrogates, against this background, the ways in which knowledge, truth, and reality are created in historical processes. Providing the space for this construction work, discourse is thereby understood as patterns that are regulated as well as inextricably connected to power. [...] Discourses are both productive and restrictive, they are structured and create structures, in turn” (6; my translation).

⁸⁴ By ‘statement’ I refer to one of Foucault’s difficult delineations of the discourse as a domain of all statements (*énonces*) about one subject-matter. Here, statement represents a constitutive and meaningful element of the discourse (see Mills (1997), p. 5f. and Landwehr (2010), p. 8). Or, in Foucault’s (1969/2002) words: “We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unit, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated [...]; it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined” (131). Despite the often-criticised blurriness and incoherence of the term (as has been pointed out, e.g. by Frank (1988), p. 25), I fundamentally follow Foucauldian notions of ‘discourse’. Scholars such as Mills (1997), Kilian (2004), and Landwehr (2010) provide a range of differing definitions which need to be carefully considered when using the term. In this study, I thus understand the discourses of melancholy as an “individual group of [all; S.B.] statements” about melancholy (see Kilian (2004), p. 64) as it both mirrors the heterogeneous structure of the episteme of melancholy and regulates it at the same time (see 64.). Moreover, the discourses of melancholy are part of a complex and dynamic system of power and resistance (see 65), which counts especially true in terms of the gendering of melancholy as will be shown in the poem analyses of chap. 3. I also agree with Kilian in considering literature a discourse in itself (see 69), since literature – like other discourses – correlates with other non-literary discourses, but without solely reproducing their specific contents. Rather, as Kilian underlines, literature creates its own discursive subjects and questions, prevalent discursive practices and formations (see 69). Moreover, it obeys its inherent rules (e.g. in terms of genre or tradition), and is historically contingent (see 69).

⁸⁵ For the aesthetic turn in the criticism of eighteenth-century women poetry, see Susan Staves (2006/2010). Staves rightly states: “It cannot be a sin against feminism to say that some women wrote well and others wrote badly, that some were intelligent, reflective, and original, others dull, unreflective, and formulaic” (4).

Chapter Outline

This thesis is divided into four main chapters. In chapter one, I shall discuss selected medical treatises spanning from Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) to Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733). I shall address how the gradual transformation of melancholy corroborated a new medical conception of melancholic women, and how this transformation still ensured former gender stereotypes and the systematic devaluation of women in the medical and other related cultural discourses of melancholy. Finally, this chapter will show how medical discourses on melancholy, previously limited to a scientific readership, became widely perceived, with far-reaching cultural implications.

Chapter two will provide the theoretical foundation for the following chapters and will tackle the problem of defining melancholic literary writings. I will develop a typology of literary melancholic texts which reflects melancholy's heterogeneous and dynamic character. Central to my discussion are the melancholic self and the melancholy experience. Finally, I will discuss the intersections of melancholy and poetry, defining poetic elements as key characteristics of literary melancholic writings, e.g. introspection, self-reflexivity, as well as a 'melancholizing' reading dimension.

The process of remapping female melancholic texts that this study ultimately aims to initiate begins in chapter three. It challenges accepted definitions of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry that limit our hermeneutic expectations and that are significantly shaped by prototypes such as Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (both 1645) and Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" (1751). I will unfold a literary landscape of melancholy poetry that reflects upon contemporary philosophical, cultural, and literary currents. Against this backdrop, I will close read a selection of poems by Augustan women writers as diverse as Anne Wharton, Anne Finch, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Elizabeth Carter, Henrietta Knight and Mary Leapor.⁸⁶ In addition to their deeply ambivalent poetic

⁸⁶ The women poets had a socially elevated background, which is usually associated with an unusually high standard of education, and knowledge in the classic and modern languages. There are two exceptions to this rule from the group of poets discussed in this chapter: Elizabeth Carter and Mary Leapor. Carter had a long-lasting standing as an extraordinary woman scholar and translator at her time. Her reputation as a scholar and 'co-founder' of the bluestocking circle of the late eighteenth century often overshadowed her literary career, which she had pursued in the 1720s and 30s. Leapor, on the other hand, belonged to the unusual 'category' of working-class poets – other famous examples of this category were Stephen Duck (the "thresher poet"), Mary Collier (the "washer woman") and Ann Yearsley ("The Milkmaid of Bristol" and "Lactilla") – in which the well respected eighteenth-century literary patrons, e.g. Alexander Pope and Hanna

configurations of melancholy and self-constructions, the selection of the poems is based on a representative variety of literary practices that these women writers use, as well as the social positions they inhabit.⁸⁷

In chapter four, the process of remapping continues. I shall argue that the experience of loss and grief in particular adds another dimension to female melancholy poetry. The 'female' elegy will serve as a case in point, since it provides a discursively predetermined space for literary experiments with mourning and melancholy and the construction of alternative melancholic selves. I will analyse a number of elegies written by Mary Chudleigh, Mehetabel Wright, and Elizabeth Boyd. Reading the 'female' elegy as melancholic, highlights a new perspective on the gendering of melancholy, which enhances our understanding of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry written by Augustan women and of the beginnings of a new melancholic femininity.

More, and the polite Georgian readership had an increased interest. For an excellent biographical account of Elizabeth Carter, see Norma Clarke's *Dr Johnson's Women* (2005). For an introduction to eighteenth-century working class poetry, see Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance. Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739–1796* (1990), William J. Christmas, *The Lab'ring Muses: Work, Writing, and the Social Order in English Plebeian Poetry, 1730–1830* (2001), and Susanne Kord, *Women Peasant Poets in Eighteenth-Century England, Scotland, and Germany: Milkmaids on Parnassus* (2003).

⁸⁷ The corpus of melancholy poetry by eighteenth-century women writers is of course much wider than my actual selection. As mentioned above (see FN 3), Sena (1970) provides first indications to potential poems and writers (both male and female). However, since many texts especially by women writers have been rediscovered since 1970, a re-evaluation of this corpus is certainly overdue.

1. Hot Blood and Nervous Minds: The Construction of Female Melancholies in Medical Discourses of the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries

“When [...] I first dabbled in this Art, the old Distemper call’d *Melancholy*, was exchange’d for the *Vapours*, and afterwards for the *Hypp*, and at last took up to the now current Appellation of the *Spleen*, which it still retains, tho’ a learned Doctor of the *West*, in a little Tract he hath written, divides the *Spleen* and *Vapours*, not only into the *Hypp*, the *Hyppos*, and the *Hyppocons*; but subdivides these Divisions into the *Markambles*, the *Moon-palls*, the *Strong-Fives*, and the *Hockogrokles*.”⁸⁸

Introduction

The close relationship between medicine and literature in the eighteenth century provides the framework for this chapter. I contend that the paradigmatic change in the medical discourse of melancholy, brought about by the shift from humoral explanations of the body and mind towards nervous explanations, was a vital aspect of the radically changing perception of women as sufferers of melancholy – and, ultimately, of women’s appropriation of melancholy in their poetry. Following this trajectory, this chapter sets out to explore the medical construction of specifically female melancholies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. I aim to delineate this particular strand of melancholy within its medical discourses, in order to expose the discursive patterns of female melancholy,⁸⁹ as well as to highlight the relations to other highly gendered diseases such as hysteria and hypochondria.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Robinson (1732), p. 1062. The physician Nicholas Robinson also published a treatise about the topic called *A new system of the spleen, vapours, and hypochondriack melancholy* (1729); for a brief reading of this treatise, see e.g. Harrison (2011), p. 7f. For a representative eighteenth-century medical account of melancholy, see “MELANCHOLIA” in Robert James’s *A Medicinal Dictionary* (1743-1745), vol. II, n. pg.

⁸⁹ I use the term “female melancholy” despite its obvious problematic nature in terms of potential essentialism. Throughout this study, I consider sex and gender differences as social and cultural constructs. To distinguish female melancholia from other forms of melancholy, I adapt Peter de Bolla’s (1989) approach to the analysis of a “discursive network” (7). By this phrase, de Bolla suggests that “at any specific historical [...] social, political, cultural, and ideological [...] juncture a discursive network articulates the ‘real’, it allows and controls the possibilities for representation” (7). I hence differentiate between the discourse *on* female melancholy and the discourse *of* melancholy. This differentiation enables me to focus specifically on this particular strand of the discourses of melancholy, and to recast it as a medical, social, and cultural construct.

⁹⁰ The medical discourse of melancholy needs to be considered in terms of the virulent eighteenth-century discourse of madness, whose framework has been discussed in Michel Foucault’s *History of Madness* (1961/2006). For the general discourse of melancholy, the standard work from antiquity until early modern times still is Klibansky et al. (1964/1979); for a medico-historical overview of melancholic theories, see Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression. From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (1986); more selective, but still providing an excellent introduction is Jennifer Radden’s *The Nature of Melancholy. From Aristotle to Kristeva* (2000). For eighteenth-century melancholia as a part of the history of madness, Roy Porter’s study *Mind-Forg’d Manacles. A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (1990) is indispensable. Moreover, Allan Ingram’s article “Death in Life and Life in Death: Melancholy in the Enlightenment” (2006) further positions melancholy’s double position in eighteenth-century discourses of madness. Vieda Skultans’s *English Madness. Ideas on Insanity, 1580-1890* (1979) also covers a number of aspects related to melancholy and includes a

The discourse on female melancholy will be delineated through a representative selection of medical treatises of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which denote milestones of the discursive evolvement of female melancholy, but also cover the paradigmatic shift from humours to nerves. In more detail, this selection includes Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* (1671), Thomas Willis's *Two discourses concerning the soul of brutes* (1683) and *An Essay of the Pathology of The Brain and the Nervous Stock* (1684), Thomas Sydenham's "Letter to Dr. Cole" (1681/82), Richard Blackmore's *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours* (1725), and finally George Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733).

One of the main challenges of discussing the medical nature of melancholy around 1700 is that despite the sheer quantity of texts and new scientific standards, an early taxonomy of melancholic disorders proves almost impossible. The diversification of melancholy in numerous and seemingly different, yet closely related nervous disorders creates a unique terminological chaos which is difficult to disentangle. Thus, the medical 'labels' I wish to establish are in themselves unstable. However, they are highly useful when attempting to sketch early eighteenth-century 'female melancholy'.

1.1 Introducing "Women's Melancholy"

Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)

One of the most influential and authoritative texts about melancholy for the seventeenth and the following centuries is without doubt Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).⁹¹ The text is a prime example of the intimate relationship of medicine and literature at the time.⁹² The *Anatomy* increasingly lost its impact and popularity in the eighteenth century⁹³ as its eclectic and accumulative

strong gender perspective. T.H. Jobe's article "Medical Theories of Melancholia in the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries" (1976) focuses on the great medical shifts of the late seventeenth century and explains them in terms of melancholy. For the basic medical knowledge of different explanations of the body, e.g. mechanism, see Theodore M. Brown, "From Mechanism to Vitalism in Eighteenth-Century English Physiology" (1974).

⁹¹ Criticism on Burton's *Anatomy* includes most notably Babb's *Sanity in Bedlam. A Study of Robert Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1959) and Ruth Fox's *The Tangled Chain. The Structure of Disorder in The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1976). In recent years critics published more extensively on Burton's *Anatomy*. Especially Angus Gowland's comprehensive study *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (2006) and Mary Lund's *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England. Reading The Anatomy of Melancholy* (2010) have lately influenced Burton criticism.

⁹² For an analysis of Burton's treatise as a literary text, see Bell (2011), and Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), esp. chap. 5.

⁹³ After the first publication in 1621, Burton endlessly revised and published another four editions of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1624, 1628, 1632 and 1638) up to his death in 1640. The last edition that

style began to feel dated.⁴ However, Burton's treatise is also outstanding in that it is one of the few texts of the seventeenth century in which a specifically female kind of melancholy is represented and examined. Before focussing on the particular character and position of Burton's "Women's Melancholy," I will briefly introduce the formal and content-related character of the *Anatomy*, displaying the definition, causes, and cures of melancholy in order to set the stage for an eighteenth-century culture of *melancholia* in general, and of female melancholy in particular.

From Causes to Cures

Besides the often discussed satirical introduction "Democritus Junior to the Reader" and other peritexts,⁵ the treatise comprises three partitions which are divided and subdivided into sections, members, and subsections. Like other early modern anatomists, Burton searches for the 'true nature' of his subject matter. Yet unlike medical anatomists, Burton attempts the impossible by dissecting a psychophysiological disorder, which is known to be highly metaphorical, impalpable, elusive and allusive.

Burton attempts to approach his subject systematically, yet melancholy defies his quasi-scientific scrutiny. The text works from the outside of the *corpus melancholicus* to its inner layers. Accordingly, Burton metaphorically dissects the human body and soul with regard to their properties and constituent parts, delineating the human organism from material body to immaterial soul. He then continues to describe

included Burton's numerous revisions, corrections, and additions was published posthumously in 1651. For more information about the different editions of the *Anatomy*, see Gowland ("Renaissance Melancholy", 2006), p. 7f.; for a more detailed comparison of the different editions, see Babb (1959), pp. 15-30. In the following, I will refer to the edition by Holbrook Jackson (1932/2001).

⁴ Babb (1959) points out that the *Anatomy* "remained in relative obscurity throughout the eighteenth century" and was only revived during the nineteenth century by "Charles Lamb and other men of letters" (xi). Both more recent and earlier research show, however, that although the text might have fallen "out of favour in the eighteenth century, [...] it retained one very distinguished reader in the shape of Dr Johnson (himself melancholic), and interest in it was revived by the publication of John Ferriar's *Illustrations of Sterne* (1798) which revealed the borrowings from Burton in *Tristram Shandy*" (Bamborough's DNB-entry "Robert Burton", <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4137?docPos=1>; last visit 5 Mar 2010). M.P. Boddy (1934) has argued that it had been "the wits of the eighteenth century [that] went to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* for miscellaneous information which they used without acknowledgment" (206) and has traced some of the mostly unacknowledged borrowings from Burton in various essays published in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

⁵ For a critical discussion of the peritexts of the *Anatomy*, see Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997) pp. 94-114 and Fox (1976). Another focus of research interest is the author's persona, Democritus Junior, who Burton uses overtly throughout the introduction and which hardly conceals the author. Undoubtedly, Democritus Junior serves as Burton's inscription in the male melancholic tradition. Being at once a madly laughing Greek philosopher (as described by Hippocrates and in the pseudo-Hippocratic *Letter to Damagetes*) and a serious anatomist, he offers Burton the satirical distance to a supposedly mad and melancholic world. For a detailed discussion of Democritus Junior as Burton's persona, see Gowland ("Renaissance Melancholy", 2006), pp. 287-294.

physiological processes of the body, thus constructing a medical foil against which pathological melancholic processes visibly stand out.

Based on notions of Galen and Rufus of Ephesus,⁹⁶ Burton considers melancholy a form of madness, and differentiates between three distinct types: head melancholy, melancholy of the entire body, and hypochondriacal melancholy. Working within a neo-Galenic framework,⁹⁷ it is a surplus of cold-dry black bile that causes an imbalance of the natural humoral *crasis* (i.e. mixture). However, melancholy can also result from corruption and adustion of one of the humours.⁹⁸ Therefore the severity or degree of melancholy is influenced by both the corrupted humour and by its engendering temperature:

From melancholy [i.e. black bile] adust ariseth one kind; from choler another, which is most brutish; another from phlegm, which is dull; and the last from blood, which is best. [...] If the humour be cold, it is, saith Faventinus, "a cause of dotage, and produceth milder symptoms: if hot they are rash, raving mad, or inclining to it."⁹⁹

Burton further differentiates between a habit and a disposition of melancholy.¹⁰⁰ This is crucial for Burton's own rationale, as well as for the cultural formation of melancholy. Habitual melancholy is "a chronic or a continuant disease, a settled humour, [...], not errant, but fixed; and as it was long increasing, so now being (pleasant or painful) grown to a habit, it will hardly be removed."¹⁰¹ By contrast, Burton defines a melancholic disposition as a temporary humoral response or reaction to an even small emotional incident:

In disposition, is that transitory melancholy which goes and comes upon every small occasion of sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, fear, grief, passion, or perturbation of the mind, any manner of care, discontent, or thought, which causeth anguish, dullness, heaviness, and vexation of spirit, any ways opposite to pleasure, mirth, joy, delight, causing forwardness in us, or a dislike.¹⁰²

This difference is clearly significant: whereas a melancholic disposition might be available to everybody, habitual melancholy in its ambiguous, bitter-sweet character is inherent to a certain *crasis* only, and thus to a certain group of people. Dismissing

⁹⁶ See Burton (1621/2001), part. I, pp. 174-177. For an overview of melancholy in ancient medical theories, see Flashar (1966).

⁹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the neo-Galenic understanding in Burton's *Anatomy*, see Gowland ("Renaissance Melancholy", 2006), p. 44 ff.

⁹⁸ Symptoms depend on the type of melancholy, e.g. if the melancholy is caused by the adustion of blood, like most probably in the case of Democritus Junior himself, the afflicted person is often madly laughing, whilst a natural surplus of melancholy (for instance as a result of the season) often leads to a pleasant and soft kind of melancholy.

⁹⁹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 174.

¹⁰⁰ As Gowland ("Renaissance Melancholy", 2006) observes, Burton has to draw this originally Aristotelian distinction in order to mark the difference between a "natural" state of fear and sadness and a pathological one, i.e. melancholy (see 59).

¹⁰¹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 146.

¹⁰² Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 143.

the fleeting character of the melancholic disposition, it appears contradictory that Burton values the habit of melancholy as a permanent, stable, and solid state of mind (and body), which is nevertheless based on the mixture of bodily liquids – a fairly unstable thing in itself.

Moreover, the differentiation of habit and disposition also bears importance to the cultural formation of melancholy. The transitory disposition or ‘feeling’ of melancholy provides the cultural frame in which the aestheticisation of melancholy is to be developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As will be discussed, the subjective mood of melancholy is a seminal aspect of “poetic melancholy” and thus the cultural basis of literary melancholic writing.¹⁰³

Against this background, Burton derives a basic definition of melancholy which remains the foundation for further definitions in the centuries to come: “[melancholy is] a kind of dotage without a fever, having for his ordinary companions fear and sadness, without any apparent occasion.”¹⁰⁴ This rather common definition is furnished by Burton with more detail:

We properly call that dotage, [...], “when some one principal faculty of the mind, as imagination or reason, is corrupted, as all melancholy persons have.” It is without a fever, because the humour is most part cold and dry, contrary to putrefaction. Fear and sorrow are the true characters and inseparable companions of most melancholy, not all [...]; for some it is most pleasant, as to such as laugh most part; some are bold again, and free from all manner of fear and grief [...].¹⁰⁵

This definition seems straightforward: a melancholic person suffers from a corrupted imagination and/or reason, does not show any physical signs, such as fever, and is both fearful and sad. Yet the close reading of the passage reveals that the multifaceted phenomenon defies being pinned down and the increasing number of exceptions, changes, equivocations, and explanations that follow slowly unravel Burton’s allegedly simple definition.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ See Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 217. See also the brief discussion on poetic melancholy in the Introduction, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 169f.

¹⁰⁵ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 170.

¹⁰⁶ This effect also might be owed to Burton’s self-consciously copious style, which combines countless citations and quotations from more than 1000 medical, philosophical, and various other academic and non-academic sources. Writing becomes an organic yet self-aware process: “As a good housewife out of divers fleeces weaves one piece of cloth, a bee gathers wax and honey out of many flowers, and makes a new bundle of all, [...], I have laboriously collected this cento out of divers writers, and that *sine injuria*, I have wronged no authors, but given every man his own; [...] Whom have I injured? The matter is theirs most part, and yet mine, *apparet unde sumptum sit* [it is plain whence it was taken] (which Seneca approves), *aliud tamen quam unde sumptum sit apparet* [yet it becomes something

Burton's discussion on the multitude of causes of melancholy is rich. It appears useful to simplify his complex discussion into basic categories like outward and inward causes. Outward causes cover melancholy firstly as a hereditary disorder and secondly as a reaction to an imbalance of the six non-naturals.¹⁰⁷ In addition to these causes, which relate predominantly to the bodily regimen, Burton names a number of social causes that excite melancholic disorders, such as servitude, imprisonment, poverty, and the loss of friends and family, especially with regard to the subsequent grief and mourning.

By contrast, inward causes emphasise the reciprocal relationship between the material body and the immaterial soul – an aspect which had been already indicated by the last of the non-naturals, i.e. the passions of the soul. For the early modern medical world, health and sickness depended on the balance of the humours, which also influenced the relationship between body and mind.¹⁰⁸ The body both affects and is affected by the passions and perturbations of the soul that, in turn, alter the *crasis* of the bodily humours. Thus, the passions of the soul are “properly, non-metaphorically, classified as diseases affecting the functioning of the organism.”¹⁰⁹ However, which of the two constituents of health is the stronger is a matter of debate in which Burton himself remains undecided:

For as the distraction of the mind, [...], alters the temperature of the body, so the distraction and distemper of the body will cause a distemperature of the soul, and 'tis hard to decide which of these two do more harm to the other.¹¹⁰

Since all constituents of the body and the soul can be affected by melancholy, so every human being can be affected by melancholy for all sorts of reasons:

different in its new setting]; which nature doth with aliment of our bodies incorporate, digest, assimilate, I do *concoquere quod hausi* [assimilate what I have swallowed], dispose of what I take. I make them pay tribute to set out this my *Macaronicon*, the method only is my own” (24f.). By characterising his treatise as a “cento” and his style as a “macaronicon”, Burton evidently positions the text in the poetic tradition of late antiquity. Originally, the cento is a text made from disparate poetic verses (by well-known poets) that are accumulated to a new text with a new meaning. Constitutive for this way of reception is the ongoing awareness of the original source and the frictional relationship between the texts through allusions (See “Cento”, *Brill's New Pauly*, http://www.paulyonline.brill.nl/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/cento-e230240?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.brill-s-new-pauly&s.q=Cento; last visit 3 Aug. 2010).

¹⁰⁷ See Burton (1621/2001), part. I, pp. 216-330, and in the Introduction of this study, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ For an excellent introduction and discussion of the early modern concept of the body and the soul in the context of Burton, see Gowland (“Renaissance Melancholy”, 2006), pp. 43-49.

¹⁰⁹ Gowland (“Renaissance Melancholy”, 2006), p. 47.

¹¹⁰ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 374.

Such as have the Moon, Saturn, Mercury misaffected in their genitures; such as live in over-cold or over-hot climes; such as are born of melancholy parents; as offend in those six non-natural things, are black, or of a high sanguine, that have little heads, that have a hot heart, moist brain, hot liver and cold stomach, have been long sick; such as are solitary by nature, great students, given to much contemplation, lead a life out of action, are most subject to melancholy. Of sexes both, but men more often; yet women misaffected are far more violent, and grievously troubled [...].¹¹¹

Here Burton covers some of the most influential causes of melancholy and hence designates the predominant social group most affected by melancholy: “great students, given to much contemplation”, thereby clearly alluding to the Ficinian and pseudo-Aristotelian notions of a nobilitated and scholarly melancholy.¹¹² Besides this cultural evaluation, it is the gender distinction that marks men as melancholic whereas women are said to be less often afflicted. Burton here refers to an ancient medical lore that positions women in the margins of the medical discourse of melancholy by stating how rare their affliction is, and also by emphasising the far more violent course of the disorder when contracted. The reasons for this tenet remain unsaid both in the ancient Greek and Roman treatises as well as in Burton’s, and will be discussed below in greater detail. For the time being gender, and thus the implicit cultural distinction, has to be taken as a given characteristic of a seventeenth-century melancholy.

Causes and symptoms of melancholy are reciprocal and thus hardly distinguishable. Burton aptly notes, “[...] as the causes are divers, so must the signs be almost infinite.”¹¹³ The symptoms mainly depend on the particular type of melancholy. The physical signs of melancholy are shown in the sufferer’s appearance and oscillate between “black, swarthy” and “pale, ruddy, etc.” depending on whether the melancholy is natural or unnatural.¹¹⁴ In fact, it is the mental symptoms that are more significant for the diagnosis and treatment of melancholy: states of suspicion and

¹¹¹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 172.

¹¹² Burton, alias Democritus Junior, features in the *Anatomy* as both a divine and a physician and thus in a male tradition of melancholic writings, and positions himself on equal terms with the neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino – like Burton a divine and a physician, and again like Burton, born under Saturn. This enables Burton to envision himself as healer of a whole melancholic age: “Now this being a common infirmity of body and soul, and such a one that hath as much need of a spiritual as a corporeal cure, I could not find a fitter task to busy myself about [...]. A divine in this compound mixed malady can do little alone, a physician in some kinds of melancholy much less, both make an absolute cure” (37). Schiesari (1992) strongly emphasises the solace and security of Burton’s “male” style of writing, “the patronymic authority of citation, which ensconces the writer safely within a masculine tradition, a veritable brotherhood of melancholia with whom the writer can identify in his struggle with his malady, or ma-lady, melancholia” (246).

¹¹³ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 382.

¹¹⁴ See Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 382ff.

jealousy, bashfulness, and love of solitude, fear and (most importantly) sorrow *sine causa manifesta*, have all been and will be the characteristic features of melancholy for many centuries.¹¹⁵

According to Burton and ancient medical lore, the moderation of the six non-naturals of the patient's life, is of immense importance and often sufficient to cure melancholy.¹¹⁶ Like his immediate predecessors such as Paracelsus and André du Laurens, Burton focuses on the pacification of the passions and the rectification of the mind, recommending music and mirth as some of the main remedies.¹¹⁷ Both pharmacological ("apothecary") and chirurgical remedies are far more invasive than the regimen of the six non-naturals. While pharmacological cures covered a range of herbal alteratives, emetics, and purgatives, in order to clear and strengthen both body and mind, chirurgical remedies like phlebotomy and all its variations, e.g. blood cupping, horse leeches, or hot cauteries played an important role in the curing process of melancholy well into the eighteenth century.

"Women's Melancholy"

The subsection titled "Symptoms of Maids', Nuns', and Widows' Melancholy", also called "Women's Melancholy," had not been an original part of Burton's *Anatomy*. It was added to the text from the third edition (publ. 1628) onwards.¹¹⁸ As Fox argues "the significance of such an addition [...] lies in the fact that it could occur without changing the basic structure of the whole work."¹¹⁹ This suggests that Burton might have considered women's melancholy secondary to his own text and inferior to other forms of melancholy. The passage on "Women's Melancholy" is considerably shorter and more simply structured than the descriptions of the other types of melancholy. Its position at the end of the first partition implies that it is considered to be a distinct type of melancholy, but carries less importance than the others.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ See Burton (1621/2001), part. I, pp. 385-397.

¹¹⁶ See Burton (1621/2001), part. II, p. 21ff.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed description of the cure of melancholy through the ages, see Starobinski (1960).

¹¹⁸ See Babb (1959), p. 16.

¹¹⁹ Fox (1976), p. 7.

¹²⁰ Moreover, the parameters are completely different. Whilst head-melancholy, melancholy of the entire body, and hypochondrical melancholy primarily describe the places affected, these types of melancholy are not explicitly gender exclusive. "Women's Melancholy", on the other hand, is exclusively gender specific and as Schiesari (1992) has rightly pointed out, is entirely based on the notion of melancholy as a disease (248).

The idea of women's marginality in the medical discourses of melancholy is already prevalent in ancient Greek medical writings,¹²¹ and does not greatly waver until the late seventeenth century. However, neither the ancient physicians nor Burton provide any explanation for this, which is remarkable since the similarities in terms of the humoral complexion of women and melancholy are striking. Being allegedly cold and wet by nature, women resemble cold and dry black bile in the overall important temperature. This strongly suggests that women are prone to melancholy, a notion that is also supported by the iconographical representations of melancholy by women.¹²² Scholars of melancholy usually either ignore this question altogether, or assume that women's apparent lack of control over their passions is responsible for the more violent form of melancholy.¹²³ While this argument is undoubtedly correct, especially in view of the gendering of melancholy during the eighteenth century and the dawn of sensibility, there were also humoral-based explanations.

Thus, I argue for a more complementary and interrelated approach to this question, one that also considers alleged "physiological reasons" for women's omission from melancholy, next to the well-documented lack of control over the passions. As women's general *crasis* is thought to be cold and wet, it is their blood-driven uterus that serves as the focal point in any medical treatise and treatment in terms of "female" diseases. As Helen King states: "[...] the nature of woman is dominated by one organ, the womb, and hence by only one humour, the hot and the wet: blood."¹²⁴ Hence, the womb as origin for female disorders is diametrically opposed to black bile and would therefore have been considered inimical to melancholic disorders. This also explains the severity of melancholy in the female body if afflicted by it. Since the humours are usually balanced by their opposites, the surplus of black bile clashes with the humoral nature of women and hence causes the severity of symptoms.¹²⁵

Whether Burton was aware of this explanation is secondary. Considering his discussion on women's melancholy, he evidently applies the ancient theorem of the

¹²¹ For example in texts by Rufus of Ephesus, see Flashar (1966), p. 97.

¹²² For a collection of female representations of melancholia in the fine arts, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979).

¹²³ See most notably Gowland ("Problem of Early Modern Melancholy", 2006), p. 99. See further Arikha (2007), Maclean (1980), Harvey (1975).

¹²⁴ King (1998), p. 69.

¹²⁵ In *History of Madness* (1961/2006), Foucault follows a similar line of argument, however not in terms of humoral nature, but of temperament. He states: "So cold and dryness can enter into conflict with the temperament, and from that opposition signs of melancholy will appear, all the more powerful on account of the internal turmoil, creating a force that dominates, and drags along in its wake the forces that resist. This explains why women, who are little given to melancholy, suffer to a greater degree when affected [...]" (264).

importance of the uterus successfully. Consequently, female melancholy actually belongs to uterine disorders such as hysteria and chlorosis.¹²⁶ As such, female melancholy is bound to women's sexual and reproductive organs, which makes it a highly sexualised disorder.¹²⁷

Burton, who consolidates the subcategory of female melancholy in his *Anatomy*,¹²⁸ defines female melancholy as "a particular species of melancholy [...] distinct from the rest, for it much differs from that which commonly befalls men and other women, as having only one cause proper to women alone [...]."¹²⁹ He identifies nuns, widows, and women in childbirth – i.e. women who appear to be deprived of sexual activity – as particularly prone to this kind melancholy:

This melancholy may happen to widows, with much care and sorrow, as frequently it doth, by reason of a sudden alteration of their accustomed course of life, etc.; to such as lie in child-bed, *ob suppressam purgationem*;¹³⁰ but to nuns and more ancient maids, and some barren women, [...], 'tis more familiar, *crebrius his quam reliquis accidit*, inquit *Rodericus* [it happens to these more frequently than to the rest, saith Rodericus]; the rest are not altogether excluded.¹³¹

The definition and especially the causes of melancholy in women differ considerably in their specification from Burton's earlier, basic definition and underline its kinship with uterine disorders. This kind of melancholy is

¹²⁶ This makes it inevitable to consider women's melancholy in relation to these disorders, especially since they threaten to collapse into each other terminologically with the increasing dominance of nervous explanations at the beginning of the long eighteenth century. Burton's female melancholy has been often discussed as a form of hysteria rather than of melancholy. See, for instance, Ilza Veith ((1965), pp. 124-129) and Mark Micale ((2008), p. 13). Neely (2004) suggests that seventeenth-century female melancholy was an "innovative amalgamation" of melancholy and hysteria (69), an opinion I would generally subscribe to. In this study, I attempt to keep female melancholy and other uterine disorders apart (if possible), especially since I argue that female melancholy starts to dissolve by 1680.

¹²⁷ Due to their 'natural' susceptibility to uterine disorders and lack of control over their passions (which caused severe imbalances of the humours), women were also believed to be easily affected by love-melancholy, also called erotic malady and sometimes erotomania. It was typically the result of "painfully unrequited love, of desired unfilled, of extreme romantic longing, of a desire that could turn metaphysical, of an obsessions that could cause insanity" (Arikha (2007), p. 160). Love-melancholy is commonly perceived as an ambivalent concept that figured in early modern England as an image-elevating and specifically masculine affliction (the so-called "heroic melancholia"), and excluded women in whom it raged as having a uterine disorder (see Dawson (2008), p. 4). Recent criticism, however, challenges this gender asymmetry with regard to lovesickness (see also Neely (2004)). Dawson (2008) has argued that the pathological forms of love-melancholy were by no means confined to women (see 5). Rather, "female lovesickness [...] could *either* be associated with the sexualised behaviour and incoherent speech of uterine disorder *or* with the introspective brooding and philosophical temperament" (5; emphasis in the original), since sufferers were not only defined "by gender, but also by social rank, ethical constitution, time of birth, physical make-up, and age", which allows a more versatile and differentiated approach to the gendering of this particular type of melancholy (5).

¹²⁸ Neely (2004), p. 91.

¹²⁹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 414.

¹³⁰ My translation: "because of suppressed purgations", i.e. the lack of menstruation [S.B.].

¹³¹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 414f. Emphasis in the original.

a vexation of the mind, a sudden sorrow from a small, light, or no occasion, with a kind of still dotage and grief of some part or another, head, heart, breasts, sides, back, belly, etc., with much solitariness, weeping, distraction, etc., from which they are sometimes suddenly delivered, because it comes and goes by fits, and it is not so permanent as other melancholy.¹³²

A later part of the definition mirrors the stereotypical notion of the female character in its apparent fickleness and instability and places female melancholy in the tradition of hysteria.¹³³ Again, female melancholy's sexualised character is underlined by Burton's idea of its causes which, above all, encompass menstruation as well as the uterus, which in an inflamed state emanates black vapours that corrupt the women's brain, heart, and mind, causing the melancholic symptoms of fear, sadness, despair, and anxiety.¹³⁴

Burton's list of physical symptoms demonstrates the disorder's severity and the totality with which the female body appears to be afflicted. Women complain

many times [...] of a great pain in their heads, about their hearts and hypochondries, and so likewise in their breasts, which are often sore; sometimes ready to swoon, their faces are inflamed and red, they are dry, thirsty, suddenly hot, much troubled with wind, cannot sleep etc.¹³⁵

From these early physical symptoms, further mind-related ones proceed like "a brutish kind of dotage, troublesome sleep, terrible dreams in the night [...]"¹³⁶ The women "are apt to loathe, dislike, disdain, to be weary of every object, etc., each thing is almost tedious to them, they pine away, void of counsel, apt to weep and tremble, timorous, fearful, sad, and out of all hope of better fortunes."¹³⁷ Apparently beyond the realm of reason, they "cannot tell how to express themselves in words".¹³⁸ Burton's slightly disdainful tone underlines the inferior and at times imaginary character of female melancholy. These women are

¹³² Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 415.

¹³³ For an excellent and comprehensive overview of the constructions of early modern femininity, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman. A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (1980).

¹³⁴ Besides the uterus, menstruation is an important component of women's health. It also belongs to the six non-naturals (see Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 233) and is believed to wreak havoc when being missed. For early modern medical and cultural connotations of menstruation, see Fischer-Homberger (1979), pp. 53-63, and Dawson (2008), esp. chap. 6; for the ancient Greek medical background, see King (1998). For a list of symptoms of female melancholy, see Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 415.

¹³⁵ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 415.

¹³⁶ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 415.

¹³⁷ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 415f.

¹³⁸ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 416.

stupefied and distracted, they think themselves bewitched, they are in despair [...]. [N]ow their breasts, now their hypochondries, belly and sides, then their heart and head aches; now heat, then wind, now this, now that offends, they are weary of all; and yet will not, cannot again tell how, where, or what offends them, though they be in great pain, agony, and frequently complain, grieving, sighing, weeping, and discontented still, *sine cause manifesta* [without apparent cause], most part;¹³⁹

The marginality of “Women’s Melancholy” and its afterthought-character are yet more palpable in view of its cure. While the second partition of the *Anatomy* deals at length with the numerous remedies of all different types of melancholy, women’s melancholy remains completely disregarded – however not untreated. As cure lies beyond the usual remedies or is reduced to a bare minimum¹⁴⁰ – “[t]he cure is hard in man, but much more difficult in women”¹⁴¹ – Burton returns to established cures of uterine disorders and recommends marriage, and thus sexual intercourse, in order to relieve melancholic women: “But the best and surest remedy of all, is to see them well placed, and married to good husbands in due time; *hinc illae lachrymae* [hence those tears], that’s the primary cause, and this the ready cure, to give them content to their desires.”¹⁴² Unsurprisingly, Burton deliberately abstains from any intellectually engaging therapies such as music or moderate studying etc, to avoid wasting any heat through thinking and hence avoiding the further cooling down of women’s already cold nature.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 416.

¹⁴⁰ In this respect Burton relies heavily on his predecessors and states: “The several cures of this infirmity, concerning diet [...], physic, internal, external remedies, are at large in great variety in Rodericus à Castro, Sennertus, and Mercatus, which whoso will, as occasion serves, may make use of” (part I, 416f.). It seems as if Burton, who usually describes all kinds of physical processes, cures, and evacuations in great detail, is avoiding the closer investigation of female bodily functions. It is justified to assume that some of the cures (e.g. the melancholy of the whole body, e.g. blood letting, rectification of the six non-naturals, and purgations), are partly transferable to the cure of female patients. According to these cures, it is paramount to rectify the six non-naturals in order to restore the bodily and mental health of the patient. In regard to women two different items of the six non-naturals are of interest: the rectification of retention and evacuation of the body as well as the mind. In “Retention and Evacuation rectified”, Burton explicitly points out that the oppression of menstruation can cause melancholy and the physician has to take care that moderate and regular bleedings take place (part II, p. 33). However, the “Exercises rectified of Body and Mind”, are more interesting from a gender point of view and also form part of the six non-naturals. Whilst men are advised to moderately study in order to keep their mind busy, studying is certainly not Burton’s advice to cure melancholy in women: “Now for women, instead of laborious studies, they have curious needleworks, cut-works, spinning, bone-lace, and many pretty devices of their own making, to adorn their houses, cushions, carpets, chairs, stools (“for she eats not the bread of idleness,” Prov. xxxi, 27 [...]) confections, conserves, distillations, etc., which they show to strangers” (part II, p. 98). The cure for women does not just comprise the needlework in order to keep them busy, but also the showing off to visitors to gain in the satisfaction of their work.

¹⁴¹ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 430.

¹⁴² Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 417.

¹⁴³ See Dixon (1995), p. 205.

Through marriage as the proposed cure, Burton ensures prevalent ideas of social hierarchies and order, and stresses women's 'natural' subordination to men.¹⁴⁴ He further suggests that it is women's "desire" to be submissive to men, by which it is clearly inferred that sexual fulfilment plays an active part in establishing women's submissiveness.¹⁴⁵ The order Burton seeks to reinforce thus promises to correct women's physical, mental, and social 'dis-order'.

The "idle gentlewoman" poses another problem for Burton's idea of social order, since this social group seem to evade their social obligations. Unmarried, and thus neither in charge of a household nor of a family, Burton considers these women exceedingly prone to female melancholy:

For seldom should you see an hired servant, a poor handmaid, though ancient, that is kept hard to her work and bodily labour, a coarse country wench, troubled in this kind, but noble virgins, nice gentlewomen, such as are solitary and idle, live at ease, lead a life out of action and employment, that fare well in great houses and jovial companies, ill-disposed peradventure of themselves, and not willing to make any resistance, discontented otherwise, of weak judgement, and subject to passion (*grandiores virgines*, saith Mercatus, *steriles, et plerumque melancholicae* [grown-up girls, barren women, and widows are usually melancholy]); such for the most part are misaffected and prone to this disease.¹⁴⁶

The class aspect, which appears to be a new component in Burton's concept of female melancholy, would be increasingly important for the construction and gendering of nervous disorders such as hysteria and hypochondria in the course of the eighteenth century¹⁴⁷ – both as a disorder as well as a social and cultural distinction. In Burton's context however, it underlines female melancholy's inherent function to highlight apparently deviant forms of femininity in the social context: thus, it singles out already socially marginalised groups of women and marks them as pathological.

Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* compiles an incredible amount of traditional notions of melancholy and provides important insights into an early modern

¹⁴⁴ Burton, himself a life-long bachelor, interestingly praises marriage in the highest tone, but also clearly emphasises the "natural" gender hierarchy as the social body: "The husband rules her as head, but she again commands his heart, he is her servant, she his only joy and content: no happiness is like unto it, no love so great as this of man and wife, no such comfort as *placens uxor*, a sweet wife." (Burton (1621/2001), part. III, p. 53).

¹⁴⁵ Schiesari (1992) goes a step further and suggests that Burton's remarks epitomise his actual horror of "the desire of mature women [...]" which would lead him to assimilate these cases of melancholy in elderly women to witches. She remarks upon the potential danger of these comparisons: "The seriousness of such a charge should not be underestimated in the seventeenth-century context of witch-burning, especially when the charge comes from a prominent Protestant theologian in a supposedly scholarly work" (251).

¹⁴⁶ Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 417.

¹⁴⁷ For the increasing importance of class, see also below the discussion on Cheyne's *The English Malady*, p. 70.

understanding of melancholy in conjunction with women. Burton generally regards women, with the exception of widows, nuns, and virgins, as rarely (but then severely) afflicted by melancholy, despite their cold-moist humoral set-up. Although he himself does not offer any explanations for this apparent medical fact, I argue that the complementary approach of humoralism and the regimen of the passions provide convincing explanations to this conundrum. Additionally the common belief that women lack control over their passions, the medical focus on the uterus also strongly accounts for this alleged contradiction. Being related to the hot and moist blood and hence diametrically opposed to the cold and dry bile, the uterus is thought inimical and defiant towards melancholy. An immense surge of black bile and the clash within the uterine environment thus accounts medically for the severity of the melancholic afflictions in women. As both uterine, as well as humoral theories are increasingly challenged in the course of the seventeenth century, melancholy and its gendered types are to be re-negotiated and modified.

In the *Anatomy*, female melancholy is represented as a humoral-uterine disorder, and thus as a highly sexualised subtype which primarily affects sexually inactive women who are shunted to the margins of seventeenth-century patriarchal society. Curing female melancholia primarily strives to 're-integrate' women into society by marriage and sexual intercourse (i.e. evacuation in terms of the six non-naturals), which promises to re-balance their *crasis* and subsequently order their minds. Burton presents women's melancholy as closely related to hysteria, though not necessarily identical with it. However, the intersections between both disorders are also visible and continue to increase in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁴⁸

The Female Voice: Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* (1671)

Jane Sharp's treatise offers a specifically female perspective on the issue of women's melancholy, a perspective that is formed from a practical medical approach, rather than a theoretical one.

Little is known about the life of the late seventeenth-century midwife Jane Sharp (fl. 1641–1671).¹⁴⁹ Whereas no personal details could have been restored, the few particulars of her professional life are entirely drawn from the preface and the

¹⁴⁸ See Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 381 where he compares hypochondrical melancholy to hysteria – a notion which will become prevalent in the eighteenth century as shown below.

¹⁴⁹ For a quite recent biographical outline, see, for instance, Moscucci's *DNB*-entry of Sharp (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45823?docPos=2>; last visit 29 Mar. 2013), as well as Barbara Mortimer's short entry in Bynum and Bynum (eds.), *Dictionary of Medical Biography* (2007).

dedicatory letter of her book *The Midwives Book or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered*.¹⁵⁰ On the title page, Sharp describes herself as a “Practitioner in the Art of Midwifery above thirty years”, thus defining her professional standing.¹⁵¹

Her obscure personal and professional background has led to the occasional discrediting of Sharp as a “male quack doctor.”¹⁵² However, she and her midwifery manual have been re-assessed as a “genuine” female voice by recent feminist critics,¹⁵³ and general critical opinion classifies the treatise as “the first English manual for midwives written by a woman.”¹⁵⁴ Although midwifery nowadays is considered a predominantly female domain, late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century (female) midwives witnessed the emergence of male midwives trespassing on the formerly enclosed female space of the birthing chamber.¹⁵⁵

Within the birthing chamber, obstetrical authority was hard-fought over; outside the birthing chamber, however, textual obstetrical authority was clear-cut. Midwifery manuals of the early modern and enlightened period were exclusively male authored, and a popular business that sold well.¹⁵⁶ Although the majority of these authors had not witnessed a birth (hence the description of the birth process is often omitted), or seen any female reproductive organs, these texts constitute the ‘official’ medical version of female anatomy and childbirth. Moreover, midwifery manuals differ from other medical treatises insofar as they are written in the vernacular for a lay audience: “they function as mediators between those learned texts that purport to offer ‘authoritative’ scientific knowledge and their lay acceptance.”¹⁵⁷

Sharp’s text echoes the midwifery manuals of her contemporaries and predecessors. Elaine Hobby demonstrates Sharp’s ongoing references to well-known seventeenth-century manuals like Nicholas Culpeper’s *A Directory for Midwives* (1651, 1656), his

¹⁵⁰ First published in 1671, Sharp’s manual had reached its fourth edition by 1725, strongly suggesting it was still known to eighteenth-century audiences. The last two editions, published in 1724 and 1725, appeared under the title *The Compleat Midwife’s Companion* (see Hobby (1999), pp. xxxviii-xxxix).

¹⁵¹ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 1.

¹⁵² Rousseau (“Strange Pathology”, 1993), p. 132.

¹⁵³ See Hobby (1999), Bicks (2007), Fife (2004).

¹⁵⁴ See Keller (1995), p. 101.

¹⁵⁵ Historically, the birthing chamber, including the childbirth, would be in full control of a female midwife. Physicians were only called in if the delivery of the child turned out to be difficult and the midwife’s options had run out. This led to the fact that early modern physicians had practically no knowledge of the childbirth process or of female anatomy. Yet this state of ignorance was to change fundamentally in the eighteenth century and the birth of man-midwifery. For a detailed discussion of the professionalization of midwifery, see Keller (1995) and Fife (2004). For a critical historical study about men-midwives, see Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery. Childbirth in England 1660-1770* (1995).

¹⁵⁶ See Hobby (2001), p. 201.

¹⁵⁷ Keller (1995), p. 102.

translation of Daniel Sennert's *Practical Physick* (1664) and, again in the translation of Culpeper, *Bartholinus Anatomy* (1668).¹⁵⁸ However, in many respects Sharp's text was unique for its time.¹⁵⁹ Besides being the first midwifery manual in the English vernacular,¹⁶⁰ it is explicitly addressed to her fellow-midwives, "To The Midwives Of England. Sisters".¹⁶¹ This aspect is characteristic: it emphasises the sense of community of midwives as a rather coherent social and professional group; it excludes male midwives, emphasising the female gender of the specific readership as well as of the profession in general; and it demonstrates Sharp's national consciousness as a reaction against the predominance of continental midwifery manuals.¹⁶²

Another trait of Sharp's text is its strong didactic impetus which, again, addresses a female readership – literate, yet laywomen – and implicitly responds to underlying assumptions of the mental inferiority of women and the male authority in terms of 'official' scientific knowledge, especially (the unknown) female anatomy.¹⁶³ The text occupies a mediating position between what Sharp calls speculative and practical knowledge, i.e. knowledge in theory and practice, and it criticises the idea that her fellow-midwives "are not well versed in both these."¹⁶⁴

Sharp confirms the importance of the uterus as the traditional location for female diseases: "It was the judgement of *Hippocrates*, that womens [sic!] wombs are the cause of all diseases [.]"¹⁶⁵ This does not imply that the manifestations of the disorders are restricted to this area only. On the contrary, since the womb acts in agreement or

¹⁵⁸ See Hobby (1999), pp. xviii-xix.

¹⁵⁹ In her article "Mrs Jane Sharp. Midwifery and critique of medical knowledge in seventeenth-century England" (1995), Eve Keller successfully demonstrates the distinctiveness of Sharp's manual in comparison to other popular manuals such as *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum* (1670) by James Wolveridge.

¹⁶⁰ There had been female predecessors in France, e.g. Louise Bourgeoi's *Observations* (1621). Only shortly after Sharp's treatise, the renowned German midwife Justine Siegemund published her well-known midwifery manual *The Court Midwife* (orig. *Die Kgl. Preußische und Chur-Brandenburgische Hof-Wehemutter*) (1690).

¹⁶¹ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 5.

¹⁶² See Hobby (1999).

¹⁶³ For a more detailed description of Sharp's didactic intentions, see Hobby (1999), pp. xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁶⁴ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 100. The early modern "womb" carries various meanings differing from modern notions of women's sexual and reproductive organs. In her introduction to Sharp's manual, Hobby (1999) translates this term regarding Sharps usage as follows: "In places in this book, "womb" means the same part of the female body as it does today, and it is differentiated from its "neck" (vagina) and "mouth" (cervix). Elsewhere, though, the modern womb is called the "bottom," and "womb" is used for vagina. Yet another variant is for "womb" to mean both womb and vagina, treating them as a single unit" (xxxi). To complicate matters, it turns out the uterus is also called "matrix" in some places, see for example Sharp (1671/1999), p. 75, FN 2.

in 'sympathy' with other organs e.g. the brain and the heart: uterine disorders are often displayed in other parts of the body or faculties of the mind.¹⁶⁶

Sharp's selection of disorders includes commonly known female maladies like chlorosis, hysteria, and melancholy:

they are that which is called the white Feaver, or green Sickness, fits of the Mother, strangling of the Womb, Rage of the Matrix, extreme Melancholly, Falling-Sickness, Head-ach, beating of the arteries in the back and the sides, great palpitations of the heart, Hypochondriacal diseases from the Spleen, stoppings of the Liver, and ill affections of the stomach by consent from the womb.¹⁶⁷

In tune with medical lore, Sharp differentiates between "extreme melancholly" and hypochondrical melancholy, originating in the spleen.¹⁶⁸ Her usage of the term allows a number of conclusions. Firstly, the basic humoral paradigm is still valid, both in (lay) medical and popular cultural use. Secondly, if Hobby is correct with her assumption that midwifery manuals were "a significant source of information about the body to the wider reading public,"¹⁶⁹ then women's melancholy as a specifically gendered phenomenon, is not just an obscure part of uterine disorders, but already a rather established disease in women.

Bound to the topic of her manual, Sharp focuses on women's reproductive organs and their physiology: the womb ("as such is hot and moist"¹⁷⁰), the menstrual blood, and the female seed as necessary components of reproduction. The obstruction of the menstrual blood and the subsequent lack of its functions, i.e. to expel corrupt humours as well as a surplus of blood that cannot be used for further concoction,¹⁷¹ are considered the main causes for uterine diseases. However, the "Monthly courses of women" as well as other female physiological processes are not the only paradigms that are vital when retracing female maladies (especially melancholy).¹⁷² As Hobby and others have previously pointed out, the social status of a woman – maid, wife, widow – works as a fundamental identity marker,¹⁷³ and ultimately

¹⁶⁶ For Sharp's (1671/1999) explanations of the agreement between the womb and other parts of the body, see p. 98ff.

¹⁶⁷ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 191.

¹⁶⁸ Sharp's term "melancholly" signifies the common multitude of meanings: depending on the context, it describes the humour black bile and its (pathological) surplus, the natural complexion, hypochondrical melancholy as well as a specifically female uterine melancholy.

¹⁶⁹ See Hobby (2001), p. 201.

¹⁷⁰ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 36.

¹⁷¹ See Hobby (1999), p. xxxiii.

¹⁷² Sharp describes the popular belief of the monstrosity of women with regard to menstruation based on, as Hobby points out, the false etymology: "The Monthly courses of women are called *Termes*; in Latin *Menstrua*: *quasi Monstrua*", for it is a Monstrous thing, that no creature but a women [sic!] hath them" (Sharp (1671/1999), p. 215, FN 2).

¹⁷³ See Hobby (2008), n. pg. In this paper presented at the conference "Before Depression: The Representation and Culture of Depression in Britain and Europe, 1660-1800" held in June 2008 (for

defines the range of women's diseases: The majority of uterine disorders is strongly connected with women's sexuality and degree of sexual activity, which in turn is implicitly associated with their social status.

The type of female melancholy, that Sharp introduces, is bound to married women and childbirth (provided a woman was married when she was with child).¹⁷⁴ Although she dedicates very little space to this particular kind of melancholy, it is significant insofar as it diversifies the picture of female melancholy and describes an early forerunner of what is known today as postnatal depression.¹⁷⁵ Thus, Sharp closely connects this specifically postnatal subtype of melancholy to postpartum treatments.

After "a sore travel", Sharp advises "to wrap her [i.e. the newly delivered woman; S.B.] back with a sheep-skin newly flead off, and let her ly in it, and to lay a Hare-skin, rub'd over with Hares blood newly prepared, to her belly."¹⁷⁶ Wrapped in the different layers of animal skins, the woman is to lie for different lengths of time according to the season (two hours in the winter, one hour in the summer). This treatment "will close up the parts too much dilated by the childs [sic!] birth, and will expel all ill melancholly blood from these parts."¹⁷⁷ The rationale behind Sharp's therapy is to infuse heat into the naturally cold female organism that, in its weakened postpartum state, is to be strengthened – both physically as well as mentally. For this Sharp prescribes "some nourishing broth or Cawdle to comfort her," and a light diet of chicken and a moderate amount of wine with "Saffron, Mace and Cloves"¹⁷⁸ which the woman may drink for a month (and may use for further swathing).

Sharp's notion of the "ill melancholly blood"¹⁷⁹ as an immanent component of the birth process, and the blood's expulsion from the postpartum female body is both manifold as well as speculative. One possible and obvious reference is the lochia and its dark blackish colour, which it adopts after a few days after the birth.¹⁸⁰ In order to

more information see <http://www.befored Depression.com>), Hobby briefly examines the medical phenomenon of female melancholy in Jane Sharp's manual as the background for early modern autobiographical conversion narratives by women.

¹⁷⁴ This specific kind of female melancholy features in Burton's list of women who are afflicted: "to such as lie in child-bed, *ob suppressam purgationem*" (Burton (1621/2001), part. I, p. 414f.).

¹⁷⁵ See Hobby (2008), n. pg.

¹⁷⁶ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 162.

¹⁷⁷ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 162.

¹⁷⁸ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 163.

¹⁷⁹ The malignancy of the black humour is sufficiently demonstrated when Sharp (1671/1999) states that both melancholy and phlegm cause the cancerous "Schirrhous," a tumour which befalls the female breast (see 253).

¹⁸⁰ In another contemporaneous midwifery text, 'Six Hundred Miseries': the Seventeenth Century of the womb. Book 15 of 'The Practice of Physick' by Lazare Rivière, a Montpellier physician, translated by the

avoid an obstruction or congestion of the lochial blood, which can lead to inflammation of the ovaries, high fever etc., the midwife would check on the outlet of this highly infectious blood. Sharp does not refer here to old menstrual blood, which was thought to be transformed into breast milk. The crucial point is, and Sharp's further recommendations underscore this idea, that women are especially at this particular time psychologically as well as physiologically vulnerable and thus, perceptible to melancholic disorders.¹⁸¹

She also discusses female melancholy in a way that corresponds more to a Burtonian idea of the term:¹⁸²

There is moreover (from ill tempered seed, and melancholly blood, in the vessels near the Heart, which contaminates the Vital and Animal Spirits) a melancholy distemper, that especially Maids and Widows are often troubled with, and they grow exceeding pensive and sad: for melancholy black blood abounding in the Vessels of the Matrix, runs sometimes back by the great arteries to the heart and infects all the spirits.¹⁸³

Here, melancholy arises from both the black humour as well as "ill tempered seed," i.e. female seed that had not been ejaculated during sexual intercourse – hence, the evacuation (as part of the non-naturals) is out of balance. Since maids etc. are *qua* definition sexually non-active, they are specifically prone to this particular kind of melancholy. In these cases, Sharp defines the disorder clearly as a temporary affliction and not a chronic or inevitable illness of maids. These women show the common signs of melancholy, i.e. pensiveness and sadness, as a consequence of the melancholy blood running back from the uterus to their heart. By infecting the vital and animal spirits, the whole body and brain (incl. the faculties of the mind) are being affected and distorted. However,

famous herbalist Nicholas Culpeper in 1678, shows that postnatal melancholy was considered in close connection to the "suppression of Child-Bed Purgations" (130). Rivière regards the suppression of the lochia to be caused by "increased thickness of the blood, narrowing or obstruction of the blood vessels, cold air entering the womb and closing the vessels, having cold feet, drinking cold fluids, fear, sadness or other passions of the mind which wither the flow of the blood from the womb" (130). Most of these causes suggest that coldness – again the similarity to cold black bile cannot go unnoticed – embodies a great danger to women in childbed. Thus the mother has to be kept warm, possibly with similar devices like Sharp's hare and sheep-skins. The similar appearance of the lochial blood and black bile becomes even more obvious when Rivière describes a "lead-coloured or black stinking matter [that] should flow from the womb" (130) and which will rectify the suppressed purgations. Concerning the treatment, like other physicians and midwives of the time Rivière prescribes mild purging remedies to procure the six non-naturals, esp. the evacuations.

¹⁸¹ See Hobby (2008), n. pg.

¹⁸² One main difference between Burton's and Sharp's notion of women's melancholy concerns the women afflicted. Whilst Burton considers nuns (separately from maids, widows, and virgins) as prone to this kind of melancholy, Sharp sees nuns rather as afflicted by hysterical passions however closely related this is to the melancholy endured by maids, widows, and virgins. See Sharp (1671/1999), p. 241.

¹⁸³ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 241.

when this blood lieth still, they are well; but if it be stirred, or urged, then presently they fall into this distemper, they know not why: and the arteries of the spleen and back beat strongly, and melancholly vapours fly up. They are sorely troubled, and weary of all things; they can take no rest, their pain lieth most on the left side, and sometimes on the left breast: in time they will grow mad, and their former great silence turns to prating exceedingly, crying out that they see fearful spirits, and dead men,¹⁸⁴

Although Sharp does not present any particular reasons for the stirring of the blood, she implicitly refers to the passions of the mind, e.g. love, grief etc.¹⁸⁵ Again, the interplay of blood and passion shapes the construction of female melancholy, but this time with a different emphasis. Finally, Sharp provides a classical case study of (female) melancholy displaying all typical signs: sadness without an apparent cause, women who are “troubled and weary of all things,” sleep-deprived, restless and showing pains in the area of the spleen. Eventually they reach a state of frenzy and delusion. The vicious melancholic vapours which befuddle the woman’s imagination and which are “much like the wind, very powerful, and almost unperceived; [...] so subtle and thin, that they pass in a moment through the whole body,”¹⁸⁶ are merely signs, yet not illnesses in themselves.

The similarities and differences to Burton’s descriptions of causes and symptoms are obvious: Whilst Burton sees the cause of women’s melancholy in the menstrual blood and the female reproductive organs, Sharp consistently focuses on the humoral balance and the surplus of black bile in the blood. For her, female anatomy and physiology are not malignant *per se*, but rather “noble parts; but the best things once corrupted, become the worst, and degenerate into a venomous nature, and are little better than Poyson.”¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the numerous symptoms Burton describes are far more severe and ensnarled with hysteria, whilst Sharp makes a noticeable effort to keep these two disorders apart.¹⁸⁸

Like Burton, Sharp acknowledges the negative prognostics of women’s melancholy. If it remains untreated, melancholy will drive the sufferers to suicide – either by drowning or hanging.¹⁸⁹ However, it is in terms of the cure that Sharp is most distinctive. Where hard bodily labour, religious exertions and in particular marriage (and hence, sexual intercourse) belonged to Burton’s repertoire to cure women’s

¹⁸⁴ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 241f.

¹⁸⁵ See Sharp (1671/1999), p. 238f.

¹⁸⁶ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 238.

¹⁸⁷ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 236.

¹⁸⁸ Although Sharp tries to keep the uterine disorders apart, she constantly acknowledges their similarities and points towards the sheer impossibility of differentiating clearly between them. For Sharp’s complete discussion of green sickness, see pp. 194-198; for her discussion of hysteria, see pp. 235-242.

¹⁸⁹ Sharp (1671/1999), p. 242.

melancholy and keep these women in (patriarchal) order, Sharp's approach differs drastically. She concentrates on rebalancing the humours through purgations and diet, leaving social implications aside.

Although iatrochemical and -mechanical explanations of the human body were rapidly advancing, Sharp appears at first sight to be rather traditional in her approach to physiological explanations and processes. However, her manual is progressive in respect to the idea of treatment of patients in general. According to Hobby, Sharp's position towards women is "more sympathetic" than her contemporaries.¹⁹⁰ Although she is equipped with a professional distance, she appears benevolent in her attitude towards her patients and her evaluation of female disorders and physio-psychological states. This is also apparent in her discussion of female melancholy. Although she adheres to the basic symptoms of melancholy *qua* definition, she stresses the pathological aspect of the disease, but not in conjunction with female anatomy and physiology. Notwithstanding women's social status and degree of sexual activity, Sharp considers melancholy a disease based on a humoral imbalance within a specific parts of the body, and cures it according to humoral ideas. No attention is paid to the women's alleged social, religious or moral shortcomings.

Expanding the boundaries of the Galenic notion of the female body as a reversed, colder, and thus defective model of the male, Sharp achieves a change of perspective in evoking the female body as an equal version of the male body. Both in terms of reproduction as well as diseases, she therefore presents a differentiated picture of melancholy in women within an exclusively female social and medical environment.

1.2 Between Humours and Nerves: Melancholy, Hysteria and Hypochondria

Thomas Willis's *Two Discourses Concerning the Soul of Brutes* (1683) and *An Essay of the Pathology of The Brain and the Nervous Stock* (1684)

The physician and natural philosopher Thomas Willis (1621-1675) enters the discourses on female melancholy, hysteria, and other pathological diseases of the human body and mind at the same time as Jane Sharp, and introduces the prevalence of the brain and the nervous system. Willis's far-reaching achievement lies in his systematic and naturalising attempt "to convert diseases that had long been thought to be caused by the blood, viscera, or even supernatural agents, into diseases of the

¹⁹⁰ Hobby (2001), p. 206.

nervous system.”¹⁹¹ Through this seminal shift in attention towards the nervous system, the gendering of nervous disorders is again at stake and must thus be re-negotiated. In this context, female melancholy starts to undergo a process of desexualisation, whilst melancholy as a disorder becomes increasingly feminised and diversified.

Willis's medical theory is based on three pillars:¹⁹² iatrochemistry,¹⁹³ the brain and nervous system, and his notion of the different souls (i.e. the mind). Like other contemporary iatrochemists, e.g. van Helmont and Franciscus Sylvius, Willis believes that all matter is composed of five chemical principles: spirit, sulphur, salt, earth, and water. According to these principles and their combination, Willis explains both hard and soft parts of the body, as well as the nature of the spirits.¹⁹⁴ Two constituents are crucial to Willis's understanding of the nervous disorders that resemble melancholy: the animal spirits and the corporeal soul. While they are already a major part of the bodily system in humoral thinking, the animal spirits gain even more importance at the beginning of the long eighteenth century.¹⁹⁵ Distilled from arterial blood, the animal spirits were thought to be extremely pure, subtle, active, and elusive particles that performed complex physiological and psychological functions.¹⁹⁶ Their movement and circulation, within the hollow nerves as well as within the borders of the cerebrum and cerebellum, account not only for action and movement, but also for the “translation” between the body and different parts of the soul; their precise composition and functions were a virulent (but futile) topic for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century natural philosophers and physicians.¹⁹⁷ The common denominator of these various opinions was the idea of animal spirits as a liquid matter which mediated between body and mind, as well as between the brain

¹⁹¹ Frank, Jr. (1990), p. 141. With his seminal lecture and subsequent article “Thomas Willis and His Circle: Brain and Mind in Seventeenth-Century Medicine,” Frank, Jr. provides an excellent introduction to Willis's medical thinking and significance. My reading of Willis's iatrochemical ideas is heavily indebted to this article.

¹⁹² For a comprehensive discussion of Willis's scientific axioms, see Frank, Jr. (1990), pp. 129-141.

¹⁹³ I.e. “healing medicine,” a joint branch of chemistry and medicine.

¹⁹⁴ For a more detailed discussion about Willis's approach to iatrochemistry, see Isler (1965), pp. 48-51 and Frank, Jr. (1990), p. 116ff.

¹⁹⁵ G. S. Rousseau provides a short introduction into the history of the concept of the animal spirits in his “Introduction” (2004), here pp. 18-22.

¹⁹⁶ For a short, but more detailed description of the process of distillation, see Frank, Jr. (1990), p. 132. Noga Arikha (2007) rightly states that although Willis seemingly introduces an entirely new system, there is a similarity between the doctrine of the humours and its underlying process of concoction to be found in Willis's processes of distillation (see 225).

¹⁹⁷ The animal spirits remained medically mysterious and perplexing throughout the eighteenth century, see Rousseau (“Strange Pathology”, 1993), p. 158.

(as the seat of the soul), and the different organs and muscles – via the nerves – in order to transmit sensation and motion. If disturbed by vehement passions for instance, the spirits could not perform their tasks sufficiently or became confused and ‘dis-ordered’ in their action. Through the interconnection of the nervous system, the ‘disorder’ of the spirits subsequently became manifest on both physical and psychological levels. Hence, the treatment of mental diseases is always concerned with body and mind, as well as with the rectification of the animal spirits.

The second important constituent is the corporeal soul. Following the Aristotelian notion of the soul, Willis distinguishes between the rational, the animal, and the corporeal soul.¹⁹⁸ Intrinsic to both humans and brutes, the corporeal soul is in charge of the instinct of self-preservation as well as reproduction and is comprised of two parts: the vital and the sensitive soul. Generating heat through the process of “fermentation,”¹⁹⁹ Willis depicts the vital soul as a flame, “which was fed by the nitrous, active particles from the absorbed air in respiration”.²⁰⁰ Through this heat, the vital soul – not unlike the idea of concoction in terms of the humours – digests food and thus maintains the different body parts. By analogy, the sensitive soul is conceived as “movement and agitation”²⁰¹ of the luminescent, clear and subtle animal spirits within the brain and the nervous system, where it is also located. Hence, in the case of a disorder in the animal spirits, the corporeal becomes equally disordered. As an important part of the nervous system, the sensitive soul thus transmits all motions and sensations to the brain and the rational soul.

Nervous melancholia

In Willis’s understanding, melancholia is the result of a complex chemical composition and agitation of both animal spirits and the corporeal soul. His discussion of melancholy in his late work *Two discourses concerning the soul of brutes* (*De anima brutorum* 1672; Engl. 1683) clearly marks the transition from humoral to nervous system related theories. The new classification of melancholia as a nervous

¹⁹⁸ Frank, Jr. (1990) discusses several reasons why Willis had subscribed to a two-fold idea of the soul rather than that of Cartesian dualism. He suggests that Willis’s move towards a rational and a corporeal soul arose from “his pressing desire to see man in a way that squared his own experience as a clinician and scientist.” Furthermore, “if one ascribed all human mental phenomena to the rational soul, then the diseases of the body could be thought to derange that which was immortal in a human being: his reason and will. This verged on blasphemy. Indeed, Willis felt strongly that the dignity of the rational soul was actually vindicated by believing in its corporeal servant” (131).

¹⁹⁹ For the entire process of fermentation as the basis of Willis’s iatrochemical approach, see Willis, *De Fermentatione* (1646; in *Diatribae Duae*). See also Frank, Jr. (1990), p. 132.

²⁰⁰ Frank, Jr. (1990), p. 132.

²⁰¹ Frank, Jr. (1990), p. 132.

disorder is equally underpinned by Willis's belief in his neuroanatomical and -pathological approach, as well as his disbelief in the doctrine of the four humours: "But we cannot here yield to what some *Physicians* affirm, that *Melancholy* doth arise from a *Melancholick* humor, somewhere primarily and of it self begotten, and they assign for its birth, several places, to wit, the Brain, Spleen, Womb, and the habit of the Body."²⁰²

Initially, Willis's definition of melancholia closely follows Burton's line.²⁰³ He considers melancholia to be "a raving without a Feavour or fury, joint with fear and sadness"²⁰⁴ and generally classifies it as

a complicated Distemper of the Brain and the Heart: For as the *Melancholick* people talk idly, it proceeds from the vice or fault of the Brain, and the inordination of the Animal Spirits dwelling in it; but as they become very sad and fearful, this is deservedly attributed to the Passion of the Heart.²⁰⁵

Hence, melancholy can be described as "either a cognitive malfunction or a matter concerning the relation of reason to passion".²⁰⁶ The "cognitive malfunction" relates to an "inordination of the Animal Spirits," targeting the transmitting intersection between brain and nervous system. Willis elucidates these purely mental symptoms in terms of their somatic causes. A change in the chemical mixture of animal spirits results in their disordered performance and hence causes melancholy.²⁰⁷

Willis's imagery again underscores his transitional position. Throughout his discussion, Willis uses traditional imagery of black bile (and its underlying moral connotations of good and evil) to describe the animal spirits, their pathological chemical change, and the consequences thereof. Hence, the usually "transparent, subtle and lucid" animal spirits turn "obscure, thick and dark"²⁰⁸ when causing melancholy. Through their now darkened and obscure colour, the animal spirits "represent the Images of things, as it were in shadows, or covered in darkness"²⁰⁹ and so cause misconceptions of the imagination and distorted reason. The underlying cause for their metamorphosis is to be found in their analogy to the chemical composition of the blood from which the spirits are distilled. In the case of

²⁰² Willis (1683), p. 192. For the traditional pairing of melancholy and mania in Willis's treatise, see Foucault (1961/2006), p. 273f.

²⁰³ It is rather conspicuous that Willis does not refer to Burton in this context at all, as Ober (1987) has pointed out (see 232).

²⁰⁴ Willis (1683), p. 188.

²⁰⁵ Willis (1683), p. 188.

²⁰⁶ Arikha (2007), p. 225.

²⁰⁷ See Willis (1683), p. 188.

²⁰⁸ Willis (1683), p. 189.

²⁰⁹ Willis (1683), p. 189.

melancholy, the animal spirits are distilled from (too) salty blood and become acetous.²¹⁰ According to Willis, the final cause for melancholy thus lies in the fundamental change of the nature of the animal spirits:

[T]he liquor instilled into the Brain from the Blood [...] hath degenerated from its mild, benign, and subtil nature, into an Acetous, and Corrosive, like to those liquors drawn out of Vinger, Box, and *Vitriol*; and that the Animal Spirits, which were from the middle part of the Brain, irradiating both the globous substance, as also the nervous *System*, and do produce all the Functions of the Senses and Motions, both interior and exterior, have such like Effluvia's, as fall away from those Acetous Chymical Liquors.²¹¹

Against this iatrochemical background, Willis develops three symptomatic characteristics of the afflicted animal spirits from which he further deduces the analogous mental pathology of the melancholic. Besides their clouded colour, the animal spirits are characterised, firstly, as being in perpetual motion. By analogy, melancholics suffer from a perpetually disturbed imagination “for that their animal spirits consist of a continually moveable matter”.²¹² Secondly, the animal spirits “are not long able to flow forth”.²¹³ Hence, although the melancholics’ thoughts are in perpetual motion, they can comprehend little, since the animal spirits “being degenerated into an acid nature, do not irradiate or quickly pass thorow the whole compass of the Brain, [...], but flowing in the middle part”²¹⁴ where their force merely reaches the nearest surroundings. Finally, the animal spirits leave their former cerebral tracts and cut new ways and passages into the brain. Hence, “cogitations are brought before the [rational, S.B.] Soul, not such as they were wont to be, but new and incongruous, and for the most part absurd”.²¹⁵

Moreover, Willis holds the relationship between reason and the passions responsible for causing melancholy. Here, melancholy is considered a “Passion of the Heart”²¹⁶ identified by sadness and fear. By examining what causes these emotions, melancholy clearly becomes a distemper of the corporeal soul and subsequently, of the (too saline) blood. Willis describes the passionate symptoms of melancholy in reference to the vital soul (as part of the corporeal soul) and states:

²¹⁰ See Willis (1683), p. 189.

²¹¹ Willis (1683), p. 189.

²¹² Willis (1683), p. 190.

²¹³ Willis (1683), p. 190.

²¹⁴ Willis (1683), p. 190.

²¹⁵ Willis (1683), p. 191.

²¹⁶ Willis (1683), p. 188.

First, in Sadness, the flamy or vital part of the soul is straitened, as to its compass; and driven into a more narrow compass, then consequently, the animal or lucid parts contracts its sphere, and is left vigorous; but in Fear both are suddenly repressed and compelled as it were to shake, and contain themselves within a very small spaces;²¹⁷

Whether in sadness or in fear,

the Blood is not circulated, and burns not forth lively and with all burning, but being apt to be heaped up and to stagnate about the *Praecordia*, stirs up there a weight or a fainting; and in the mean time, the Head and the Members being destitute of its more plentiful flux, languishes.²¹⁸

The reason for the smothering or straitened “burning” of the vital soul is the surplus of saline particles, which are generally less flammable and threaten the vital flame “to be blown out with every blast of wind.”²¹⁹ This yields to a diminished action of the heart that depends on the vital soul, causing the heart rate to slow down and the (oversalted) blood to stagnate in the precordia.²²⁰ He concludes: “when that vital flame is so small and languishing, that it shakes and trembles with every motion, it is no wonder if that *Melancholick* person is as it were a sinking, and half overthrown mind always fearful and sad.”²²¹

Willis extends the complexity of the interrelation of animal spirits, blood, heart, and vital soul by claiming that “vehement passions of the mind” viz. “destroying love, vehement sadness, panick, fears, envy, shame, care and immoderate study”,²²² cause the melancholic transformation of the animals spirits in the first place. Making the passions the beginning and the end of this process, the traditional self-perpetuation of melancholy and its self-contained nature are reaffirmed: melancholy begets melancholy begets melancholy.

However, intentionally or not, Willis breaks new ground in terms of the gendering of melancholy. Although he still considers the womb and the spleen as possible places of origin,²²³ melancholy is not primarily considered a uterine (or splenetic) disorder anymore.²²⁴ Willis tries to combine old notions of gender-specific melancholia with his

²¹⁷ Willis (1683), p. 191.

²¹⁸ Willis (1683), p. 191.

²¹⁹ Willis (1683), p. 191.

²²⁰ For a comprehensive presentation and discussion of Willis’s theory of melancholia, see Jobe (1976), here p. 223.

²²¹ Willis (1683), p. 191.

²²² Willis (1683), p. 192.

²²³ Regarding the spleen and melancholy, Willis (1683) states: “It is a common opinion, and also ours, that sometimes *Melancholy* is either primarily excited, or very much cherished from the Spleen, being evilly affected, and so from thence is called by a peculiar word, *Hypochondriack*. [...] But the Blood is first in fault, begetting in it self from the beginning *Melancholick* foulnesses, deposes them to the Spleen, which receiving again, after their being exalted into the nature of an evil Ferment, is more vitiated in its disposition, by their foulness” (193).

²²⁴ See Willis (1683), p. 192f.

new approach. Regarding female melancholy, he dismisses the idea of the uterine disorder and emphasises the nervous system as its source. He remains in tune with contemporaneous thinking however when he falls back on stereotypical vagaries such as the menstrual blood and the unfulfilled sexual desire:

Because sometimes the original of this Disease is deduced from the Womb, it is not to be thought, that the *Melancholick* humor is there at first generated, but the occasion of *Melancholy* doth proceed from thence; either because the whole Blood being infected, and made degenerate by reason of a stoppage of the *Menstrua*, strives to go into a *Melancholy Dyscrasie* or intemperature; or because, by reason of the provocations of *Venus* or Lust, being restrained, not without great reluctancy of the Corporeal Soul, the Animal Spirits being forlong time forced, and restrained, become at length more fixed and *Melancholick*.²²⁵

Willis's discussion foreshadows a tendency that becomes more distinct in the course of the century: since the nervous system prevails over both humoral as well as uterine theories, melancholy is fundamentally desexualised: as both sexes share the same nervous system *per se*, man and woman are in theory equally prone to melancholy and other nervous disorders.²²⁶ However, this idea of a medical equilibrium between the sexes in conjunction with melancholy is, of course, purely hypothetical.²²⁷ A shifting of the medical discourses towards the nerves also engenders the construction of a weaker and more fragile female nervous system, as women are emphasised to be generally more prone to nerve-related disorders. Consequently, women (and effeminate men) now become thought of as sufferers of nervous disorders such as melancholy, hysteria, and hypochondria.

Although melancholy appears to be less sex-specific in nervous explanations, the issue of gendering is not resolved, but merely outsourced. As becomes apparent in Willis's works as well as those of his eighteenth-century successors, this development shifts the focus onto hypochondria (which replaces hypochondrical melancholy and is also known as spleen) and hysteria (also known as vapours).²²⁸ Although the intersection of the respective disorders indicates their eventual

²²⁵ Willis (1683), p. 192.

²²⁶ See Micale (2008), p. 21. Micale uses this argument to explain the development of male hysteria.

²²⁷ In this context Willis's *Oxford Casebook* (1981) is rather interesting, since it proves that this gender equilibrium is of a purely theoretical nature. Whilst Willis diagnosed quite a few men with a "melancholic temperament" (for an example, see 145), there are hardly any cases of women's melancholy. On July 5th, 1650, however, Willis recorded a particularly severe case of a woman who had suffered from melancholy for a longer time, before she "was seized by mania on the 19th of June" (126). Considering it "necessary to bind her with chains and ropes to keep her in bed" (126), Willis sedates her with laudanum, barley, and an infusion of poppy flowers. Her state deteriorated quickly and the next evening she "was now shouting wildly, now singing, now weeping" (126). After another night of different ointments "to be put on the region of the spleen" (127), she died.

²²⁸ For a comprehensive medico-historical overview of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hypochondria, see Esther Fischer-Homberger, *Hypochondrie. Melancholie bis Neurose: Krankheiten und Zustandsbilder* (1970).

collapse, early eighteenth-century medical treatises show that they are regarded as a continuum rather than, as often proclaimed by recent critical opinion, one phenomenon.²²⁹ In the bigger picture, however, this development is integral to the changing perception of women as melancholics, moving them from their marginalised position to the centre of the discourse.

Hysteria & Hypochondria: A Re-gendered Case of Melancholy?

Willis's dismissal of uterine-humoral explanations represents a revolutionary diversion from the female reproductive organs towards a disorder of the brain and nervous system with regard to hysteria.²³⁰ In *An Essay of the Pathology of the Brain and the Nervous Stock* (*Pathologiae cerebri* 1667; Engl. 1684), hysteria, like hypochondria, figures as a convulsive, nervous disease.²³¹

Willis's physiological explanation for convulsive disorders is based on the idea that the animal spirits undergo a chemical reaction with the so-called *copula explosiva*.²³² This leads to one or a series of "explosions" that usually originate in the brain or the nervous system. These explosions "suddenly blow up the Muscle, and from thence cause a most strong drawing together"²³³ – and hence create convulsions. The animal spirits and *copula explosiva* are carried throughout the entire body through the nerves,

²²⁹ The still common critical opinion that seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries melancholy, hysteria, hypochondria, vapours, and spleen denote one and the same medical (and cultural) phenomenon has been increasingly challenged in recent studies, for instance, by Mark Micale and explicitly by Leslie Dawson (both 2008).

²³⁰ The history of hysteria centres clearly on the womb, i.e. the uterus – either wandering, moving, suffocating or strangled – and is, thus, a decidedly gendered condition. Although increasingly challenged and criticised, Ilza Veith's *Hysteria. A History of a Disease* (1965) is still one of the standard historical studies of the disorder. A far more detailed, historical, and socio-cultural overview is presented by Sander L. Gilman et al., *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (1993) and by Elisabeth Bronfen's seminal study *The knotted Subject. Hysteria and its Discontents* (1998). For a comprehensive and well-founded introduction of hysteria, see Mark Micale, *Approaching hysteria* (1995) as well as *Perilous Chastity. Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (1995) by Laurinda S. Dixon.

²³¹ At the time, hysteria was perceived as one of the most common female disorders. Already an umbrella term for a number of sicknesses, hysteria in itself remained obscure and hard to diagnose: "The hysterical passion", Willis (1684) writes, "is of so ill fame among the Diseases belonging to Women, that like one half damn'd, it bears the faults of many other Distempers: For when at any time a sickness happens to a Womans Body, of an unusual manner, or more occult original, so that its cause lies hid, and the Curatory indication is altogether uncertain, presently we accuse the evil influence of the Womb (which for the most part is innocent) and in every unusual symptom, we declare it to be something Hysterical, and so to this scope, which oftentimes is only the subterfuge of ignorance, the medical intentions and use of Remedies are directed" (69).

²³² The *copula explosiva* is a deviation of the *copula elastica*, which (when combined with animal spirits) is responsible for the motive function of the body. Willis's medical approach to hysteria has to be read in the context of the writing of his contemporary, the physician Dr Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose theory rested on the idea of contaminated blood rushing to the lungs to cause the disorder and which Willis (1684) reacts to in his treatise (see 70f.).

²³³ Willis (1684), p. 2. For Willis's full medical discussion of the development of convulsions, see chap. 1 "Of Spasms or Convulsive Motions in General" in the same treatise.

causing spasms and contractions in various parts of it. The causes of these convulsions lay either in the irritation and subsequent confusion of the animal spirits (and the *copula*) through a 'vehement' passion (e.g. fear, anger, sadness), or in the case of a chronic, habitual, and convulsive condition, in the disposition of the afflicted person.²³⁴ This last factor also denotes gendered differences:

[I]t is to be observed, that the animal spirits are in some more tender, and easily dissipable from their very birth; so that indeed they are not able to suffer any thing very strong or vehement to be brought to the sense or imagination, but straight they fly into confusions: For this reason, women more than men, and some of them more than others, are obnoxious to the passions called Histerick.²³⁵

Whereas women's alleged physical and psychological fragility was previously explained by both their humoral constitution and their 'imperfect' female nature, this new explanation supports the same conclusion by referencing the comparatively less developed inborn weaker female nervous system.

Regarding hysteria, Willis's first innovation lies in the clear-cut separation of the disorder from the accursed uterus and in its classification as a nervous disorder:²³⁶

"The Distemper named from the Womb", Willis states, "is chiefly and primarily Convulsive, and chiefly depends on the brain and nervous stock being affected [...]."²³⁷ Willis vehemently rejects the ancient uterine theories of the "wandering womb" both because of the fixed anatomical position of the uterus itself²³⁸ and also due to pathological changes of the brain that Willis himself claims to have noticed in hysterical women.²³⁹

Moreover, in contrast to his predecessors, Willis denies the interrelation between sexual activity, age or social status of the women and the disorder. He states:

²³⁴ See Willis (1684), p. 4.

²³⁵ Willis (1684), p. 6.

²³⁶ See Veith (1965), p. 132f.; Rousseau ("Strange Pathology", 1993), p. 152; Micale (2008), p. 18.

²³⁷ Willis (1684), p. 70. Regarding the chief symptoms of hysterical passions, Willis states: "A motion in the bottom of the Belly, and an ascension of the same, as it were a certain round thing, then a belching, or a striving to Vomit, a distention, and murmur of the *Hypochondria*, with a breaking froth of blasts or wind, an unequal breathing, and very much hindred, a choaking in the throat, a *Vertigo*, an inversion, or rolling about of the eyes, oftentimes laughing, or weeping, absurd talking, sometimes want of speech, and motionless, with an obscure or no pulse, and deadish aspects, sometimes Convulsive motions in the Face and Limbs, and sometimes in the whole Body, are excited" (69).

²³⁸ "[...] for that the body of the Womb is of so small bulk in Virgins, and Widows, and is so strictly tied by the neighbouring parts round about, that it cannot of it self be moved or ascend from its place" (Willis (1684), p. 69).

²³⁹ In the course of various dissections, Willis (1684) claims to have observed that although the women were sick with hysteria, their "Womb being very well" whilst the beginning of the nerves in the back parts of their heads were "moistened and wholly drowned in a sharp *serum*". He interprets this serum as animal spirits "possessing the beginning of the nerves in the head, are infected with some taint," i.e. they are thrown into confusion, or being tainted with malignant humours (71).

Women of every age, and condition, are obnoxious to these kind of Distemper, to wit, Rich and Poor, Virgins, Wives, and Widows: I have observed those symptoms in Maids before ripe age, also in old Women after their flowers have left them; yea, sometimes the same kind of Passions infest Men.²⁴⁰

Most strikingly, Willis does not only merge several female disorders like chlorosis, female melancholia, and other uterine and menopausal conditions, he is also the first to explicitly associate men with hysteria.²⁴¹

A brief delineation of the complex picture of similarities and dissimilarities between melancholia, hypochondria, and hysteria will not only illustrate the contiguities of the three disorders, but will also take into consideration the implication for the discourse on female melancholy.²⁴²

The most obvious differences are based on Willis's classification and definition of hypochondria and hysteria as convulsive diseases of the brain and nerves, whereas melancholia belongs to the nervous diseases free of convulsions and fits.²⁴³ However, all three disorders share the same initial causes: vehement passion or anger, sadness and/or fear as well as immoderate lifestyle and diet. Moreover, in the case of hysteria and melancholia, Willis points out that the suppression of menstruation and a lack of sexual intercourse (or unrequited sexual desire) might be minor causes which can enhance the disorders in women. In the case of hypochondria and melancholia, the complex role of the spleen serves as the common denominator. Although Willis vindicates the spleen from its notorious reputation as both the seat of black bile and the origin of hypochondrichal melancholy,²⁴⁴ his discussion about the organ's impact on hypochondria is highly ambiguous and his frequent usage of

²⁴⁰ Willis (1684), p. 69. As a consequence of the unhooking of hysteria from sexual activity, the various ways of treatment change accordingly. Although Willis does not really add anything new to the cures of hysteria, he certainly abandons the idea that marriage (and, implicitly, sexual intercourse) brings the hoped-for cure. So, he focuses on fumigations, anti-spasmodics and anti-convulsive remedies as well as strengthening cures in order to do the trick. For a detailed discussion of the various cures of hysteria, see Willis (1684), p. 75 and 78f.

²⁴¹ In his history of male hysteria, Mark Micale even pinpoints Willis's further descriptions as possibly "the first rudimentary 'case history' of a male hysteric" (19). Generally, Micale's argument is based on the assumption that male hysteria historically permits entry to all kinds of diseases and marks melancholics as well as hypochondriacs as male hysterics. Although he presents an historical overview, his focus rests on the nineteenth century as the 'golden age of hysteria.'

²⁴² Dawson (2008) provides a useful and thorough discussion of the general differences between hysteria, green sickness and uterine fury for the seventeenth century in which she establishes the close relationship between the different uterine disorders and at the same time attempts to delineate the borders between them; see pp. 49-72.

²⁴³ They are all pathologies of the animal spirits, the brain and the nervous system alike.

²⁴⁴ Again, Willis (1683) fulfils his transitional role by describing the spleen's ambiguous contribution on melancholy: "*Melancholy* is either primarily excited, or very much cherished from the Spleen, being evilly affected, and so from thence is called by a peculiar word, *Hypochondriack*. [...] But the Blood is first in fault, begetting in it self from the beginning *Melancholick* foulnesses, deposes them to the Spleen, which receiving again, after their being exalted into the nature of an evil Ferment, is more vitiated in its disposition, by their foulness" (193).

humoral vocabulary further diminishes the distinction between hypochondria and melancholy.²⁴⁵

The mental symptoms of hypochondria and melancholia are also of striking similarity. Besides hysterical symptoms such as respiration difficulties and convulsions, the remaining symptoms can be easily conceived as those of what was formerly known as hypochondrical melancholy: swollen precordia and winds, but also

a sinking down of the spirits and frequent fear of trances comes upon them, that the sick think Death is always seizing them [...], long watchings, a Sea, and most troublesome fluctuation of thoughts, an uncertainty of the mind, a disturbed fancy, a fear and suspicion of every thing, an imaginary possession of Diseases, from which they are free; also very many distractions of spirits, yea, sometimes melancholly and madness accompany this sickness.²⁴⁶

Yet all three disorders are correlated, as they can aggravate and cause each other. Due to their greatly overlapping relationship, an effective medical distinction between the three disorders remained illusory. Through the pairing of hysteria and hypochondria,²⁴⁷ critics have claimed that Willis separated hypochondria from melancholy for good and “granted it a status as an independent diagnostic entity”.²⁴⁸ However, the distinction was not thorough. On closer inspection, it seems as if Willis’s clinical description turns out to be a hybrid form of hypochondrical melancholy and a male version of hysteria, and thus demonstrates the terminological and clinical confusion that accompanied the shift in attention to the nervous system in the discourse on melancholy.

²⁴⁵ Willis’s (1684) attempt to solve this problem reads as follows: “[W]hen the Spleen does not strain the melancholy Recrements of the Blood, nor cook them into a fermentative matter [...], the disposition of the mind is made duller, the body grows fat with idleness; yea and the blood being more sluggish than it ought to be, is apt to stand still within its Vessels, or at least less lively circulated: But on the contrary, where the fermenting power of the spleen is too much exalted or perverted, the blood by that means being more sharp than usual, or made more sower, it runs about rapidly here and there, and conceives irregular motions; yea, and the nervous juice, falling away from its right temper, imbues the animal spirits with an heterogeneous and explosive *Copula*, and so irritates them, as it were with goads into frequent convulsions” (85). Elsewhere, Willis even draws on the notion of the spleen (or melancholy) to cultivate a certain potential of creativity and intellectuality. Embedded in his system, he states: “it is commonly said, the sharpness and sagacity of the mind doth proceed from the Spleen; and splenetick people are accounted ingenious: But it is probable, that the rage and force of the Passions, being begun by the Spirits inhabiting the Brain, are carried to the Spleen by the passage of the Nerves; and so the Spirits there dwelling are pathetically troubled, and the Blood flowing tither is moved into a multitude of perturbations” (84).

²⁴⁶ Willis (1684), p. 82.

²⁴⁷ In “Hysteria and Hypochondria”, Foucault (1961/2006) explains in much detail, how these two disorders, which are in themselves completely different, are first constructed as complementary and how they later become fixed constituents of the repertoire of mental disorders in the course of the eighteenth century.

²⁴⁸ Micale (2008), p. 18. Jobe (1976) refers to the same point and argues in respect to melancholy that with “this separation [...], he [i.e. Willis, S.B.] effectively eliminated the influence of the spleen and liver from his consideration of the morbid physiology of *melancholia*” (221).

In terms of female melancholy, Willis's proclaimed shift towards the nerves is a turning point in two respects. Beyond uterine explanations, female melancholy as a discursive category becomes desexualised and thus depleted of (medical) meaning. This renders it practically obsolete. Since women now advance to become prime melancholics, the neighbouring gender-specific disorders, i.e. hysteria and hypochondria, play an important role in the construction of the female melancholic.

Thomas Sydenham's "Letter to Dr Cole" (1681/82)

With his "Letter to Dr. Cole" (1681/82),²⁴⁹ Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689) creates the *locus classicus* of eighteenth-century writings on hysteria,²⁵⁰ and further outsources the gendering of nervous disorders. The physician incorporates melancholy into his discussion of hysteria and hypochondria alike and further diversifies these disorders. Lastly, it can be observed that the virulent eighteenth-century cultural process of reevaluating hypochondria as the new intellectual and upper-class disorder starts with Sydenham's "Letter".

As species,²⁵¹ hysterical and hypochondrical diseases are, according to Sydenham's thinking, caused by a disorder (or ataxy) of the animal spirits responsible for both somatic and psychological symptoms.²⁵² Sydenham therefore shifts away from Willis's theory of explosion and towards the notion of the irregular distribution of animal spirits which disturbs the "economy" of the body:

This precipitates them [i.e. the animal spirits; S.B.] on the different parts of the system; so that bearing down violently and multitudinously upon particular organs they excite spasms and pain wherever the sensations are exquisitely acute; deranging and perverting the function both of the parts they leave, and of the parts they fall on. No wonder. The irregularity of the distribution is opposed to nature, and the economy takes therefore no small damage.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ The Worcester physician William Cole (1635-1716) had written to Sydenham in November 1681 both to praise him for his work on smallpox and to request his observations of the hysterical diseases. "They have long exercised (and tired) the wits of physicians. They have also (alas) eluded the recognised methods of treatment" (Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 54). Trained at Oxford, Cole was a physician and medical author himself. His works demonstrate an iatromechanical approach, and he was strongly influenced by the iatrochemical ideas of the Willis/Boyle-circle (see Guerrini's *DNB*-entry of Cole; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5862?docPos=6>; last visit 19 Mar. 2013).

²⁵⁰ Bronfen (1998) underlines the importance of Sydenham's letter by calling it "[p]erhaps the most significant turning point in the medical discussions of hysteria" (109).

²⁵¹ The gendered species also includes chlorosis, suppression of the lochia, and menstrual problems.

²⁵² See Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 90.

²⁵³ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 90. Unsurprisingly, Sydenham's text (like Willis's) still shows traces of the doctrine of the humours. He explains that although the cause of hysterical diseases is to be found in the confusion of the spirits, this can also cause putrid humours, which, in turn, enhance the violence of the hysterical manifestations. See Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 96.

Ataxy, or the confusion of the spirits, results from either violent actions of the body or more often, from the passions as the “over-ordinate commotions of the mind, arising from sudden bursts of anger, pain, fear or other similar emotions.”²⁵⁴ Accordingly, Sydenham assumes a higher susceptibility for women, and argues for a generally weaker nervous constitution as the primary cause for their affliction:

For this reason we see more female than males, hysterical; the females being endowed by Nature with a more fine and delicate habit of body, as being destined to a life of more refinement and care. Man, on the contrary, is born to labour at the tillage and pasture of the earth, and at the capture of beasts for food. This makes him of a stronger and more muscular body.²⁵⁵

The idea of a generally weaker female nervous system, as a gendered phenomenon, is finally cemented by Sydenham.

Sydenham generally considers hysterical diseases to be the most common epidemic of his time.²⁵⁶ Especially women and men that “lead a sedentary or studious life, and grow pale over their books, are similarly afflicted.”²⁵⁷ Thus, gender and class serve as markers for the hysterio-hypochondrical disorders. Sydenham, more forcefully than his predecessors, asserts the notion that female hysteria and male hypochondria are as identical “as one egg is to another”²⁵⁸ and different only in terms of gender, which further emphasises the ‘outsourcing’ process put into motion by Willis’s treatises.

Besides the common physical symptoms like violent fits of convulsions and abdominal discomforts, Sydenham’s hysterical patients are characterised by an immense physical strength, incomprehensible muttering, the striking of their breasts as well as the typical hysterical headache (the so-called *clavus hystericus*).²⁵⁹

However, it is the mental symptoms that govern Sydenham’s clinical picture of hysterical diseases. In his description, he merges hysterical and melancholic symptoms and thus creates a ‘hysteric-melancholic’ subtype prevalent in women: “Again – almost all the hysterical women that I have ever seen complain of a

²⁵⁴ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 90.

²⁵⁵ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 91. Concerning the difficult cure of hysterical disorders, Sydenham relies in the first place on Nature. Apart from this, he (like Willis) recommends gentle purges and bleedings, steel medication, the use of mineral waters (e.g. at Tunbridge Wells), a milk diet, horse riding, and laudanum (see 97-103).

²⁵⁶ See Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 85. He assumes that hysteria/hypochondria is able to “attack” different parts of the body – organs as well as muscles – which in turn “will create the proper symptoms of that part” (85). Consequently, hysterical symptoms vary within a vast range of different signs and symptoms and only the skilled physician is able to identify the disorder and is not deceived by it (see 85).

²⁵⁷ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 85.

²⁵⁸ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 85.

²⁵⁹ See Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 86.

dejection (a *sinking* as they call it) of the spirits; and, when they wish to show where this contraction (or *sinking*) exists, they point to the chest."²⁶⁰ These women laugh and cry excessively "and that without any manifest cause,"²⁶¹ and thus comply with one of the main features of melancholia.

In Sydenham's "Letter", hysteria does not only leave uterine theory behind, but almost the entire physical realm. It shifts towards the species of mental disorders that occupy neither solely the somatic nor mental areas of the patient, but instead turn into a disease "of the integral person."²⁶² Hysteria, like melancholy before it, becomes even more elusive especially since it tends to be "proteiform and chameleon-like"²⁶³, as it constantly mirrors the symptoms of other disorders. The patient's mind inevitably serves as the medical focal point and is greatly struck in its hysteric-melancholic affliction:

The patients believe that they have to suffer all the evils that can befall humanity, all the trouble that the world can supply. They have melancholic forebodings. They brood over trifles, cherishing them in their anxious and unquiet bosoms. Fear, anger, jealousies, suspicions and the worst passions of the mind arise without any cause. Joy, hope, and cheerfulness, if they find a place at all in their spirits, find it at intervals "few and far between," and then take quick leave. In these, as in the painful feelings, there is no moderation. All is caprice.²⁶⁴

And yet slowly and hardly noticeable at first, Sydenham shifts towards the positive connotations of the melancholic symptoms with regard to hypochondria. Obviously, the gender specificity of the otherwise identical disorders of hysteria and hypochondria is more complex than a mere change of terms. Sydenham states:

In all this, it is neither the maniac nor the madman that we write about, saving and excepting the hallucinations aforesaid, those who thus suffer are persons of prudent judgement, persons who in the profundity of their meditations and the wisdom of their speech, far surpass those whose minds have never been excited by such stimuli. Hence, it is not without reason that Aristotle has observed, that melancholy men are the men of the greatest genius.²⁶⁵

The quotation suggests that hysteria and hypochondria are not as 'equal' as one might have been led to believe. Although 'equal' in origins, aetiology, and clinical picture, the differing cultural value of hysteria and hypochondria resembles that of melancholy. The rarely mentioned outstanding intellectual and artistic abilities of melancholics are now transferred onto the hypochondriacs. In other words: (male) hypochondria becomes the new melancholia.

²⁶⁰ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 88.

²⁶¹ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 88.

²⁶² Boss (1979), p. 231.

²⁶³ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 89.

²⁶⁴ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 89.

²⁶⁵ Sydenham (1681-82/1848-50), p. 89.

The devalued disorder against which hypochondria is culturally elevated is hysteria. Whilst “hypochondriacal broodings were predominantly male,”²⁶⁶ hysterical females are continuously characterised as pathological with regard to both the disease and their physio-psychological nature. Hence, well-known discursive patterns of melancholy such as asymmetrical gendering are subsequently transferred into future discourses on hysteria and hypochondria.

Whereas female melancholy as a distinctive subtype goes completely unmentioned in Sydenham’s texts, the discursive gap between hysteria and melancholy is bridged by hypochondria.²⁶⁷ In turn, hypochondria feeds on the positive connotations of melancholy, but only with regard to male patients. Sydenham believes in a complex disorder comprising both the elements of melancholy and hysteria. This is emphasised by the transfer of melancholic vocabulary and medical symptoms to this new disorder.²⁶⁸ Melancholic hysteria signifies a “neurotic type” of disorder, which will become increasingly popular and fashionable in the century to come.²⁶⁹

1.3 Early Eighteenth-Century Melancholy – a Female Malady?

Richard Blackmore’s *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours* (1725)

Like many of his contemporaries, the Augustan poet and physician Sir Richard Blackmore (1654-1729) bridges the gap between medicine and literature.²⁷⁰ The spleen, its medical effects and cultural associations feature in several of his works, but his ultimate discussion upon this subject takes place in *A Treatise of the Spleen and the Vapours* (1725), to which he attaches “An Appendix being an Essay upon the Spleen”. In it he offers a detailed account on the spleen and of the (male) hypochondriac as a specific social type of the polite Georgian society.

²⁶⁶ Dewhurst (1966), p. 47.

²⁶⁷ See Boss (1979), p. 225.

²⁶⁸ Boss (1979) claims that hysteria in conjunction with hypochondria “annexe[s] parts of melancholy’s crumbling empire” (232).

²⁶⁹ See Rousseau (1969), p. 120.

²⁷⁰ The majority of critical research on Blackmore focuses on his reputation as an Augustan poet rather than on his literary works. It seems as if Blackmore’s works have never enjoyed great popularity. His four epic poems (*Prince Arthur* (1695), *King Arthur* (1697), *Eliza* (1705) and *Alfred* (1723)) and *A Satyr against Wit* (1700) were heavily criticised by the wits of his time, including John Dryden, and later Alexander Pope. Blackmore also became the object of ridicule and scorn for his literary peers and prominently featured in Pope’s landmark satire *The Dunciad* (1728); for the difficult relationship of Pope and Blackmore, see G.S. Rousseau, “Medicine and the Body” (2007), p. 216. Only *Creation: a Philosophical Poem* (1712) found favour in the eyes of his (most severe) critics and was praised by Addison and Johnson as the English equivalent to Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* and for its Miltonic qualities. For a brief introduction see Gregori’s DNB-entry of Blackmore, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2528?docPos=1>; last visit 19 Mar. 2013.

Blackmore's treatise is highlighted by a socio-cultural and medical, i.e. mechanistic approach, to hypochondria and hysteria. The development of culturally positive connoted social types – male hypochondriacs and female hysterics – based on their nervous constitution forms an important aspect of the treatise and reflects the emerging culture of sensibility.²⁷¹ Hence, Blackmore's text is strongly characterised by a dual nature that makes it interesting for both a professional as well as a genteel readership. The poet-physician himself emphasises this impression and deliberately addresses "not only [...] the Sons of Art, but [...] all intelligent Persons, though not great Scholars, or Students in Physick."²⁷² Blackmore's quasi-medical discussion of the spleen marks the shift of the medical discourse of melancholy from an exclusively scientific towards a popular scientific and culturally influential discourse. In the increasingly print-oriented environment during the early Enlightenment, the medical discourse of melancholy becomes easily accessible for both male and female members of the middle classes and thus gains social and cultural impact.

Public interest in the spleen was further fuelled by the idea of the disorder as a significant trait of national identity. Like many of his peers, Blackmore is convinced that the British population, either by constitution or climate and diet, is disposed to specific diseases, above all hypochondria and hysteria.²⁷³ He thus contributes to the on-going discussion of a particularly national disorder that George Cheyne a few years later would term "The English Malady".²⁷⁴

Besides the national aspect, the preface focuses to a large degree on the alleged profound mystery of the use of the spleen as an organ – the traditional origin of hypochondria. Although Blackmore acknowledges the spleen's general uselessness for the individual, he endows the organ with important functions in the process of procreation of the species.²⁷⁵ Although this idea would not be maintained in the

²⁷¹ See Barker-Benfield (1992), esp. chap. 1.

²⁷² Blackmore (1725), p. vii. Another marker for the popular-scientific status of his treatise is the usage of the English vernacular in terms of terminology: throughout his treatise, Blackmore refers to hypochondria and hysteria as spleen and vapours and thus highlights, on the one hand, their common popularity and, on the other hand, their vulgarity in many cases.

²⁷³ See Blackmore (1725), p. iii.

²⁷⁴ Blackmore's term for this distinctive type of hypochondria is "the *English Spleen*". The particular 'Englishness' of the disorder is based on Blackmore's belief in its severity within his own country, "since it has here gained such a universal and tyrannical Dominion over both Sexes, as incomparably exceeds its Power in other Nations" (vi).

²⁷⁵ See Blackmore (1725), p. xvii. In the appendix to his treatise, Blackmore provides a more detailed explanation of this idea: "It is probable that it performs this Office by obstructing the Blood, and moderating the Rapidity of its Motion, which otherwise might rush into the Parts subservient to Procreation with too great Violence and Abundance; and by that means communicate to them, by

centuries to follow, Blackmore's vindication of the spleen as the origin of disease proves successful. Not only does he take away the blame from "this admirable and artful organ,"²⁷⁶ but he also provides a positive, if not elementary function to the spleen – not necessarily useful to the individual, but indispensable for the preservation of mankind.

Like his immediate medical predecessors Willis and Sydenham, Blackmore classifies hypochondria as an exclusively male disorder of the nervous system. Yet, it is the refined nervous system of only a restricted number of men which is particularly susceptible for hypochondria. Most notably, Blackmore describes the constitution of the nerves of the hypochondriac as "tender and delicate."²⁷⁷ This feminization of the male nervous system elevates the sufferers of the spleen culturally and socially, while standing in stark contrast to the construction of the female nervous system as weak and pathological. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Blackmore actually attempts to endow hysteria with some intellectual qualities – with mixed success, as will be shown below.

Besides the nervous constitution, the quality of the animal spirits and tone of the fibres play an important role. Being very similar to the original black bile in their quality, these juices are to be restrained by the "glandulous Organs"²⁷⁸ in order to keep the blood (and thus the animal spirits) pure and ordered. However, due to an obstruction and subsequent expansion of these organs (such as the liver, kidney, lungs, etc.), their fibres "have lost their Tone"²⁷⁹, and malign juices percolate unopposed through the blood and consequently also through the delicate order of the nerves and spirits.

Blackmore mainly contributes to the image of the male hypochondriac. His description of this particular type draws heavily on traditional iconographical elements of melancholy: being "meagre, thin, and unmuscular", with "a pale, almost livid, and saturnine Complexion", and "a dark suspicious and severe Aspect".²⁸⁰

proper Strainers, a greater Measure of prolifick Fluids, than the regular Oeconomy of Nature demands" (228).

²⁷⁶ Blackmore (1725), p. 9.

²⁷⁷ "A tender and delicate Constitution of the Nervous System, and an inordinate Fineness and Activity of their Inmates, the Animal Spirits, being first supposed, it may be easily conceived how these volatile Guests, by various Impressions made upon them, be driven into disorderly Motions and convulsive Spasms and Contractions in any Bowel or Part of the Body" Blackmore (1725), p. 30.

²⁷⁸ Blackmore (1725), p. 37.

²⁷⁹ Blackmore (1725), p. 37.

²⁸⁰ Blackmore (1725), p. 15.

Unsurprisingly, Blackmore's prototypical hypochondriac bears a striking similarity to his melancholic predecessor.²⁸¹ As to their respective temperaments and dispositions, the hypochondriac and the melancholic seem to be one of a kind, "being very scrupulous, touchy, humoursome, and hard to please".²⁸²

There is also a striking similarity between the mental characteristics of Blackmore's hypochondriac and the melancholic. While the hypochondriac suffers from bouts of dejection, melancholy, and dullness as well as a compromised ability to reason, Blackmore also credits these patients with the positive qualities of the Aristotelian tradition. If moderately afflicted, "most of these Persons are endowed with a great Share of Understanding and Judgement, with strong and clear Reason, a quick Apprehension and Vivacity of Fancy and Imagination, even above other Men".²⁸³

Just like melancholy, however, this intellectually heightened state is delicate; as soon as the physio-psychological balance is rocked through immoderation or duration, the fickle and inconstant nature of the distemper displays itself. Blackmore observes:

a considerable Inequality [...] in the Operation of their intellectual Faculties; for at some Seasons they discover great Impertinence and Incoherence in their Thoughts, and much Obscurity and Confusion in their Ideas, which happens more often, and lasts longer in those who are far gone in this whimsical Distemper.²⁸⁴

Although he later attempts to disentangle both mental states, he merges the cultural traces of melancholy with a naturalised version of hypochondria. If the borders between the disorders were permeable before, they now seem to vanish almost completely in Blackmore's text.

Hysteria – Fact or Fiction?

Blackmore's notion of hysteria is far more ambivalent than that of hypochondria. He subscribes to two underlying assumptions: firstly, hypochondria and hysteria are an identical phenomenon; secondly, men and women generally possess the same nervous system (in spite of differences in strength). Hence, both sexes are afflicted

²⁸¹ For a detailed description of traditionally typical melancholic features and characteristics and their transformations, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), pp. 55-66.

²⁸² Blackmore (1725), p. 15.

²⁸³ Blackmore (1725), p. 23. To support his theory, Blackmore even provides re-naturalised evidence for the intellectual superiority of the hypochondriac. The reason "is this, that when the Juices strained by the Glands from the Nerves and the Lymphatick Canals, and deposited in the Brain, Stomach, Spleen, Pancreas, [...], retain a moderate Acidity and Acrimony, they only stimulate, exalt and expand the Spirits to such a just degree, as enables them to make their reciprocal Motions with a due Velocity, [...], and likewise to serve as more refined Instruments of the Understanding, by a bright and lively Representation of its Objects, and of the Imagination, [...], which by this means are stocked with a greater Plenty of clear, surprizing, and beautiful Ideas, than are commonly produced in Persons of a different Constitution" (91f.).

²⁸⁴ Blackmore (1725), p. 24f.

and blessed with the same symptoms – or so it seems. Although Blackmore seemingly treats the disorders “without any discrimination,” as Micale suggests,²⁸⁵ a closer reading of Blackmore’s chapter on hysteria inevitably questions this assumption.

Regarding hysterical symptoms, for instance, it is conspicuous that although they are similar to hypochondrical ones, they are disproportionately graver in women than in men – a tenet that supports the existing discursive patterns of the pathologisation of women. Blackmore speaks of “violent convulsions”, “great pains”, as well as

ungovernable Agitations of the Arms, tossing of the Head, and sometimes a stiff and rigid Posture of the Body [...]; and at other times they strive and struggle with extraordinary Emotion, and are scarcely held by the Arms of the strongest Persons; and in their greatest Paroxysms, their Eyes are distorted, and swim and roll in a frightful manner, with Outcries and Vociferations, and repeated Sobs and deep Sighs.²⁸⁶

Blackmore does, however, provide some limit to the mental effects of the disease by holding that hysteria “seldom entirely subverts them [i.e. women; S.B.] or brings them on a State of Lunacy.”²⁸⁷ But the fact that he actually considers lunacy in the context of hysteria (but not at all for hypochondria) is telling.

Moreover, Blackmore does not automatically assume the authenticity of hysteria as a disease with physical causes and feels the need to question the convictions of his predecessors. Although he is aware of the fact that both hypochondria and hysteria were medically classified as “*bona fide* organic disorder[s],”²⁸⁸ he focuses at first on the hypochondriac’s intellectual and artistic superiority, and later relegates the ambivalent question of authenticity and imagination to the discussion of female hysteria. In this way Blackmore implicitly raises doubts about hysteria’s factual nature and presents it as a possibly imaginary condition. According to Blackmore, the medical diagnosis of vapours and spleen “by those who never felt their Symptoms, looked upon as an imaginary and fantastick Sickness of the Brain, filled with odd and irregular Ideas”²⁸⁹ provokes dishonour, reproach, and ridicule, instead

²⁸⁵ Micale (2008), p. 27.

²⁸⁶ Blackmore (1725), p. 103f. In contrast, Blackmore’s hypochondriac suffers mostly from gastrointestinal symptoms such as wind, belching, indigestion, and convulsions. If his head, i.e. the brain, is afflicted, he feels confused and his ability to judge and reason is suspended. Although Blackmore enlists numerous symptoms, both the signs themselves as well as their description are greatly toned down and at no point reach hysterical dimensions. For the whole description of hypochondrical symptoms both corporeal and mental, see Blackmore (1725), pp. 15-27.

²⁸⁷ Blackmore (1725), p. 107.

²⁸⁸ Porter (1987), p. 49.

²⁸⁹ Blackmore (1725), p. 97.

of the compassion that is required.²⁹⁰ Although he stresses the painful reality of the patients, he concedes that hysteria could be supposed as

nothing but the Effect of Fancy, and a delusive Imagination, yet it must be allowed, that let the Cause of such Symptoms be never so chimerical and fantastick, the consequent Sufferings are without doubt real and unfeigned. Terrible Ideas, formed only in the Imagination, will affect the Brain and the Body with painful Sensations.²⁹¹

Blackmore deviates from the impartiality with which he has treated both disorders, by assigning an 'imaginary' status to hysteria alone: "Should then the Spring or Fountain of Hysterick Symptoms be sometimes only imaginary, and not real, this affords no Advantage or Comfort to the afflicted Patients."²⁹² Similarly, where Blackmore supposedly argues in equal terms with regard to the sexes, he in fact shows that not only are women, their nervous systems and imaginations more severely afflicted, but that hysteria and hypochondria are anything but equal.

Blackmore's discussion of hysteria demonstrates that although he officially announces a cultural superiority for both disorders, he still channels the discussion along traditional gender lines. This generally casts the spleen, i.e. hypochondria, as a derivative of the Aristotelian melancholy and as such superior, desirable and male, while hysteria is presented as a severe female mental disorder on the verge of lunacy.

Mixed Disorders

Where does all this leave melancholy? Acknowledging hypochondrichal melancholy as the discursive predecessor of eighteenth-century hypochondria,²⁹³ Blackmore has made several uses of the term melancholy, each of which devalue it as an umbrella term. Melancholy figures as a component, a synonym, and implicitly as the

²⁹⁰ See Blackmore (1725), p.98.

²⁹¹ Blackmore (1725), p. 99.

²⁹² Blackmore (1725), p. 99. It is important to consider the power of the imagination in this context. Hypochondria and hysteria, like melancholy, imply *per definitionem* a state of disturbed imagination – in itself a pathological state. As Fischer-Homberger (1970) points out, imagination in an early modern medical context does not necessarily suggest that an 'imagined' disorder has to be imaginary (see 107-110). I.e., although the causes of the disease might lie within the imagination, it is still a 'real' physiological disease. Imagination was then to be understood as a physiological principle and as an important component in the complex relationship of body and mind, in which psychological processes are bound to physiological ones. For a critical account of the role of the imagination within the Cartesian mechanistic model, crucial for Willis, Sydenham and Blackmore, see John P. Wright: "Hysteria and the Mechanical Man" (1980; esp. p. 244f.) and G.S Rousseau's seminal article "Science and the Discovery of the Imagination in Enlightened England" (1969). At the same time, however, the word "imaginary" was also used in the sense of "Existing only in imagination or fancy; having no real existence; not real or actual" (*OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91640?redirectedFrom=imaginary#eid>; last visit 3 Feb. 2009).

²⁹³ Blackmore (1725), p. 154.

discursive origin of the disorders under discussion – namely hypochondria and hysteria.

Here as elsewhere in treatises of the same topic, melancholy appears as unspecific. It is caused by the condition of the animal spirits and the inability “to expedite their reciprocal Flights to and from the Brain with due Vigor and Velocity,”²⁹⁴ which makes them “unapt Instruments for the Operations of the Mind and the Imagination”.²⁹⁵ The mind and the imagination are also the areas in which Blackmore locates the majority of melancholy’s symptoms. Although he recognises the existence of physiological signs, he considers mental symptoms such as anxiety, sadness, fear, and terror as most prominent.²⁹⁶ Besides the traditional distortion of the imagination, it is the constant “Flux or Train of Thoughts fixed upon one sad object”²⁹⁷ and the inability of the patient to stop ruminating and brooding which Blackmore is most interested in. He distinguishes between the positively connoted “Contemplation, Study, or Deliberation” and “unguided and restless musing”²⁹⁸ – a sign of (wo)man’s loss of control of reason.²⁹⁹

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Blackmore seeks to establish boundaries between the different mental states, proving that although the disorders are often considered identical, a fine distinction between them can still be made. Blackmore discusses the potential differences of melancholy and hypochondria with some ardour.³⁰⁰ Most interesting in this respect is the shift of positive connotations from melancholy to hypochondria (yet not necessarily to hysteria). As shown, Blackmore endows the hypochondriac or splenetic with superior intellectual and artistic qualities and stresses that this superiority of the spirits is only possible “when their Disease [i.e. Spleen; S.B.] is *abstracted* from all Complications of a melancholy Disposition.”³⁰¹ This transfer of qualities reduces melancholy to a pathological shell,

²⁹⁴ Blackmore (1725), p. 154.

²⁹⁵ Blackmore (1725), p. 162.

²⁹⁶ See Blackmore (1725), p. 155 and 163.

²⁹⁷ Blackmore (1725), p. 155.

²⁹⁸ Blackmore (1725), p. 156.

²⁹⁹ The main difference between these two states of mind is the level of control over one’s own mind and thoughts: “[W]hen a Man studies or mediates”, Blackmore (1725) says, “he commands his Faculty of Thinking, and turns it from one thing to another; but in Musing a Man is governed by his own Thoughts, and unable to restrain or divert them to other Matters [...]” (156). In the endless cycle of melancholic musing, the mind taints all images with black melancholy and thus, “sad, dark and frightful” (156). It “is under a total and lasting Eclipse” (156).

³⁰⁰ See Babb (1936), p. 175.

³⁰¹ Blackmore (1725), p. 157; my emphasis.

devoid of both its former glory and horror. Melancholy has become a mere by-product, a component to blend in with greater nervous disorders.³⁰²

George Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733)

In April 1733, *The Gentleman's Magazine* published an anonymous laudatory poem that praised one of the most fashionable nerve doctors of the early eighteenth century, Dr. George Cheyne (1671/72-1743). In the poem, Cheyne appears as a quasi-saviour of medicine and mankind as well as the "Gods-sent" successor of Thomas Sydenham,³⁰³ whose death in 1689 had caused mourning in the entire medical profession:

Long did the Sacred Art in Bondage mourn,
Become the Jest of Fools, or else their Scorn;
'Till Heav'n, to set the fetter'd Science free,
And pit'ing abject Man, created Thee,
Made Thee to act of Gods the Healing Part,
And live a Pillar to the noble Art,
To be the only shining acting Sage,
Not giv'n, but lent from them to heal this Age.
Great Wonders from above, thou Boast of Men,
Accept these Offerings from a Nameless Pen.³⁰⁴

The anonymous author "H.C." who might have been a former patient, a sufferer or a fellow-physician, presents Cheyne as an experienced medical practitioner in the tradition of contemporary and ancient medico-scientific icons like Sydenham, Archibald Pitcairne, Paracelsus and "Coan Bard," i.e. Hippocrates.

It is surely no coincidence that this poem appears at the same time as Cheyne's popular treatise *The English Malady* – "one of the best-known and most influential

³⁰² The blending and mixing with other disorders of the nerves, of which melancholy is considered a component, blurs the exact boundaries that Blackmore (1725) tries to establish. Blackmore confesses to the same difficulties as his peers: "indeed the Limits and Partitions that bound and discriminate the highest Hypochondriack and Hysterick Disorders, and melancholy, Lunacy, and Phrenzy, are so nice, that it is not easy to distinguish them, and set the Boundaries where one ends, and the other begins" (163). Moreover, since he assumes that the primary disorders are blended with other components, he creates disorders that are more differentiated but which become less distinguishable, since they share too many properties. It is debatable whether there are any 'pure' disorders in Blackmore's system at all. The denomination of the disorder depends on the one that appears dominant (see 165). In other words, the patient is diagnosed as melancholic if the properties outweigh hypo-hysterical symptoms. Since the overlapping intersections and commonly shared symptoms of the different disorders increase, other categories – such as severity and chronicity – help to construe new models of pathological taxonomies.

³⁰³ It is not just Sydenham's immense popularity that makes it quite likely that the author refers here to his death 44 years earlier. The poem establishes the powerful connection between Sydenham and Cheyne earlier and states: "'Tis Magick, powerful Magick, reigns in this, / And proves what Sydenham was, bright Cheyne is: / With admiration of the System fir'd, / Good God, how oft I've read, how oft admir'd." After his death, Anita Guerrini notes in her full-length biography and introduction to Cheyne's works, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment* (2005), that he was again compared to and connected with both Sydenham and Hippocrates (see 178).

³⁰⁴ Anonymous, ("To Dr CHEYNE", 1733), p. 205.

books of the Georgian age".³⁰⁵ The treatise, at first intended as a "Legacy and Dying-Speech, *only to my Fellow-Sufferers*,"³⁰⁶ proves to be an immediate success, eliciting six official editions within six years.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, contemporary critics encountered Cheyne's popular writings with mixed reactions, worrying about the positive connotations of fashionable mental abnormalities and "fear[ing] the dangers of indulging in such melancholy *à la mode*."³⁰⁸

The English Malady is, besides the *Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724), the most popular of Cheyne's works among his wide polite readership. It covers his medical approach consisting of Newtonian mechanism, the nervous system, practical advice about cures, case studies of respectable patients, and most notably himself. The tantalising title also promised to be a pathologisation as well as distinction of the English people. In Cheyne's *English Malady*, melancholy, spleen, and vapours further advance in their meaning as social and cultural phenomena rather than serious medical disorders. The 'body social', as examined by Cheyne in his treatise, is also a gendered body. Although Cheyne remains unusually indistinct in his elaborations on the sex of his patients, it becomes clear that the nervous body social becomes increasingly associated with both femininity and melancholy.

The preface presents the geo-social landscape in which Cheyne reviews nervous disorders of the over-indulgent, over-refined and over-sensitive members of the polite Georgian society. The development of the paradigm of a 'diseased national identity' is prominent in numerous genres in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature: medical and philosophical treatises, essays, novels, and poems.³⁰⁹ The "English Spleen," as Blackmore had previously called it, was ubiquitously described, discussed, fictionalised, and satirised. Commencing in the seventeenth century in Burton's *Anatomy*, the question as to whether England was "the region of the Spleen"³¹⁰ is debated virulently by both foreign visitors as well as by "many of the most observant and best-informed Englishmen" such as Sir William Temple, Blackmore, Shaftesbury, Addison and Steele etc.³¹¹ The most common reasons mentioned for the prevalence of splenic disorders are the English climate – the east

³⁰⁵ Porter (1991), p. vii.

³⁰⁶ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. ii.

³⁰⁷ See Porter (1991), p. ix; Guerrini (2000), p. 153.

³⁰⁸ Porter (1991), p. xi.

³⁰⁹ Oswald Doughty delineates the development of the 'English Malady' in his article "The English Malady of the Eighteenth Century" (1926). For another critical account see Moore (1953), pp. 182-188.

³¹⁰ Doughty (1926), p. 258.

³¹¹ Doughty (1926), p. 257

wind is regarded as extremely baneful – and the idle lifestyle of the English upper and middle classes as well as a national preference for solitude.³¹² The English susceptibility to ‘spleen’ gradually translates into a disorder that is simultaneously in fashion and ridiculed, and acquires a reputation of false pretence and imaginary origin. Hence, one of Cheyne’s main contributions to the ongoing discourse about the ‘English Malady’ is the complete change of connotation and evaluation of the disorder.³¹³ Cheyne explains:

The Title I have chosen for this Treatise is a Reproach universally thrown on this Island by Foreigners, and all our Neighbours on the Continent, by whom nervous Distempers, Spleen, Vapours, and Lowness of Spirits, are in Derision, called the ENGLISH MALADY. And I wish there were not so good Grounds for this Reflection.³¹⁴

Already these few lines mark the deviations from traditional descriptions of the English spleen: Cheyne neither denies nor ridicules the alleged existence of a nationalised pathology nor does he question or refute the general susceptibility of the English people. Whereas former texts draw on geo-social factors, Cheyne introduces a new set of socio-historical conditions which prove, firstly, that the English do suffer from the spleen, the vapours and melancholy – all the nervous

³¹² The allegedly increased rate of suicide in England in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had contributed to the debate around a national disorder. In his article “The Secularization of Suicide in England 1660-1800” (1986) and the study *Sleepless Souls. Suicide in Early Modern England* (together with Terence R. Murphy; 1990), Michael MacDonald discusses early modern suicide and its social, cultural, and historical implications, arguing that suicide rates were neither a direct measure of the (mental) health of a society ((1986), 51) nor did they depict an early modern reality but were based on a myth (86). Yet the process of secularisation and decriminalisation of suicide in the period following the Civil War until 1800, is still of interest with regard to the position of melancholy within this process. Melancholy features most prominently in the history of early modern suicide. Both phenomena seem to be linked and display similar developments of secularisation and naturalisation. Before the secularisation sets in after the Restoration, melancholy was well recognised as a cause for suicide. Already in Timothy Bright’s *Treatise of Melancholy* (1586), the earliest English medical work on this subject, melancholy is considered a medical, natural cause for suicide (see (1990), 104). In Burton’s *Anatomy*, suicide was linked with love and religious melancholy and was, especially in this context, enhanced by diabolical interference. “The chief difference”, so MacDonald and Murphy (1990), “between the treatment before and after the Civil War is that later writers no longer insisted that its medical causes, such as melancholy, might be amplified by supernatural ones, namely Satan and his minions” (199), and that both melancholy and suicide were highly influenced by the secularisation at the end of the seventeenth century. Melancholy continued to be a major cause of suicide (even with supernatural assistance) and the evidence of melancholic and gloomy thoughts were advanced to prove the mental disturbance of the deceased (see 104f.). The nexus of suicide and melancholy in both men and women was “a common conviction among laymen and doctors throughout the early modern period. Laymen had no difficulty in recognizing the symptoms of melancholy – they were enshrined in characters and literary stereotypes” and proved a commonplace at the time (230).

³¹³ In this context, Porter’s (1991) remark on the origins of the ‘English Malady’ is interesting. The ‘English Malady’ was initially designated the common diseases of scurvy, usually associated with the sea-faring professions, and consumption which only changed to a disorder with a mystical, slightly ethereal aura in the nineteenth century (see xxxi). For the connotations of and metaphors for consumption, see most notably Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (1990) and, more recently, Clark Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature. The Making of a Romantic Disease* (2006).

³¹⁴ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. i.

disorders covered by the umbrella term 'English Malady' – and secondly, that this "self-labelling," as Porter defines it, is rather a national distinction than a curse.³¹⁵

Cheyne's set of causes both incorporates and exceeds the standard repertoire of arguments and introduces the strong social grit of the diseased body national of Britannia:

Moisture of the Air, the Variableness of our Weather [...], the Rankness and Fertility of our Soil, the Richness and Heaviness of our Food, the Wealth and Abundance of the Inhabitants [...] the Inactivity and sedentary Occupations of the better Sort and the Humour of living in great, populous and consequently unhealthy Towns, have brought forth a Class and Set of Distempers, with atrocious and frightful Symptoms, scarce known to our Ancestors, and never rising to such fatal Heights, nor afflicting such Numbers in any other Nation.³¹⁶

From the very beginning, Cheyne emphasises the social impetus of his notion of the 'English Malady', which does not afflict all English people i.e. the national body, but only those parts of English society that are directly affected by the consequences and ill-usage of the progress of civilisation, and who are over-saturated by luxury and wealth.³¹⁷

Under Cheyne's examination the national and social body are anatomised into the body of the individual. The mechanistic workings of the individual body are presented in a basic and abbreviated manner, which designates the text for both a professional and common readership:

THESE [readers; S.B.] need only suppose, that the Human Body is a Machin of an infinite Number and Variety of different Channels and Pipes, filled with various and different Liquors and Fluids, perpetually running, glideing, or creeping forward, or returning backward, in a constant *Circle*, and sending out little Branches and Outlets, to moisten, nourish, and repair the Expenses of Living. That the Intelligent Principle, the *Soul*, resides somewhere in the Brain, where all the Nerves, or Instruments of Sensation terminate, like a *Musician* in a finely fram'd and well-tun'd Organ-Case; that these *Nerves* are like *Keys*, which, being struck on or touch'd, convey the Sound and Harmony to this sentient Principle, the *Musician*.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Porter (1991), p. xxvi.

³¹⁶ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. i-ii. Cheyne's treatise is best read in combination with Eric Gidal's article "Civic Melancholy: English Gloom and French Enlightenment" (2003). Here, Gidal discusses the enlightened French image of the English and their civic culture as melancholic. This rather surprising conjunction is, according to Gidal, everything but "counterintuitive" (25), but serves as the fundament of what he calls "civic melancholy": "Grounded in classical and medieval humoral theory, yet aligned with the methods and aspirations of the Enlightenment, this tradition understands melancholy as the dark undercurrent of political identification, removing the individual from vain aspirations and luxurious self-indulgences while simultaneously promoting civic ideals and public engagement" (25).

³¹⁷ Cheyne delineates the historical progress of civilisation from ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman societies towards early eighteenth-century English society. He identifies the origin of nervous disorders in the expansion of luxury and laziness. For Cheyne's history of civilisation, see pp. 56-59, and Porter (1991), pp. xxvii-xxix.

³¹⁸ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 4f.

Notable in his brief introduction is the interplay of the human bodily machine and the mind, which Cheyne locates in the brain. This interplay is rendered through the simile of the musician, which Cheyne uses throughout his treatise. The anthropomorphism of the mind makes it the actual agent in relation to the body: the (mental) musician plays and governs his bodily instrument. Moreover, the subsequent development of this simile illustrates that this body is already interspersed with the arts – the medical as well as the fine arts.

A healthy body is mainly defined by the right tone or elasticity of the solid nerves. In Cheyne's context, the nerves' state is of vital importance: they could either be too dry or too moist, or they could be too lax or too rigid and solid, the fibre's tone as being one major cause for nervous disorders.³¹⁹ The ideal state is firm and fibrous, able to carry the sensation just like a musical string through the body to the brain and mind, and back again. The development from a healthy body to a nervous one originates in an immoderate diet, leading to the thickening of the bodily fluids and the subsequent obstruction of the tubes and nerves within the mechanical system. These corrupted fluids and obstructions, in turn, alter the delicate tone of the nerves which as a final consequence, "either entirely stop and bring no Sensation at all to the Intelligent Principle [i.e. the brain and the soul/mind; S.B.], and convey no Action from it to the Muscles and Organs of Animal Motion, or at least false, imperfect, and delusory ones."³²⁰ Meanwhile, the weakness of the solids "produce viscid, sharp, and ill-condition'd Juices," which again lead to "weak and unelastick Solids, so that they mutually exasperate each other, and differ only as Cause and Effect, tho' the Fault of the Fluids always precedes that of the Solids."³²¹ The process Cheyne describes is, therefore, self-perpetuating and once established, nervous disorders appear impossible to interrupt, let alone cure.

Cheyne considers nervous disorders as "one continued Disorder, or the several Steps and Degrees of it."³²² This suggests a hierarchy in which vapours are a light mental disturbance whereas melancholy borders on madness: a (complete) loss of reason,³²³ a

³¹⁹ See Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 10-14.

³²⁰ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 12. See Porter (1991), pp. xxi-xxii, and Sedlmayr (2007), p. 45.

³²¹ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 106.

³²² Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 14. Elsewhere he describes this idea in more detail: "All Nervous Distempers whatsoever from Yawning and Stretching, up to a mortal Fit of an Apoplexy, seems to me to be but one continued Disorder, or the several Steps or Degrees of it, arising from a Relaxation or Weakness, and the Want of a sufficient Force and Elasticity in the Solids in general, and the *Nerves* in particular" (132).

³²³ See Guerrini (2000), p. 6.

mental state that would have not only afflicted the individual body, but also the body social.

In his writings, Cheyne is exclusively concerned with the class of lighter nervous disorders comprising vapours and spleen, as well as melancholy which is seen as a borderline case between these lighter disorders and madness:

All Lowness of Spirits, Swelling of the Stomach, frequent Eructation, Noise in the Bowels or Ears, frequent Yawning, Inappetence, Restlessness, Inquietude, Fidgeting, Anxiety, Peevishness, Discontent, Melancholy, Grief, Vexation, Ill-Humours, Inconstancy, lethargick or watchful Disorders, in short, every Symptom, not already classed under some particular Distemper is called by the general Name of Spleen and Vapours.³²⁴

Based on the general classification of nervous disorders according to their severity as well as the original nature of the nerves, it is the natural or innate weakness of nerves that leads to the delicate, tender, and refined constitution that the physician considered to be favourable to intellectual pleasures. However, since this constitution requires a fine balance, it needs to be maintained and regimented to avoid excess.³²⁵ Since weak nerves are mainly caused by an immoderate diet and a lack of bodily exercise,³²⁶ Cheyne therein identifies the affluent upper and the emerging middle classes as most-likely patients:

When I behold with Pity, Compassion and Sorrow, such *Scenes* of Misery and Woe [derived from nervous disorders; S.B.], and see them happen only to the *Rich*, the *Lazy*, the *Luxurious*, and the *Unactive*, those who fare daintily and live voluptuously, those who are furnished with the rarest Delicacies, the richest Foods, and the most generous Wines [...]: to those who leave no Desire or Degree of Appetite unsatisfied, and not to the *Poor*, the *Low*, the *meaner Sort*, those destitute for the Necessaries, Conveniencies, and Pleasures of Life, of the Frugal, Industrious, the Temperate, the Laborious, and the Active [...]. *I must*, [...], conclude that it must be something received into the Body, that can produce such terrible Appearances in it, some flagrant and notable, Difference in the *Food*, that so sensibly distinguishes them from these latter. And that it is the miserable *Man* himself that creates his Miseries, and begets his Torture, or, at least, those from whom he had derived his bodily *Organs*.³²⁷

The privileged individuals within their social class become responsible for their own health. 'Secular' sins are evinced by the individual's body and mind and, hence, sentence the body social to vapours, spleen, and melancholy. The increasing frequency of these disorders that Cheyne claims to have observed is linked to the

³²⁴ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 194. He further defines: "In general, when the symptoms are *many, various, changeable*, shifting from one Place to another, and imitating the *Symptoms* of almost every other Distemper described [...], [t]hen they may be properly called *Vapours*" (195f.) Cheyne continues to differentiate three degrees of the vapours after which he orders the case studies in part III of his treatise.

³²⁵ See Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 20f.

³²⁶ See Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 23f.

³²⁷ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 28f.

change of the social structure and the general political and economic state of the body social and body national:

Since our Wealth has increas'd and our Navigation has been extended, we have ransack'd all the Parts of the *Globe* to bring together its whole Stock of Materials for *Riot, Luxury*, and to provoke Excess. The Tables of the Rich and Great (and indeed of all Ranks who can afford it) are furnished with Provisions of Delicacies, Number, and Plenty, sufficient to provoke, and even gorge, the most large and voluptuous Appetite.³²⁸

Wealth, luxury, excess – these are the pillars on which Cheyne's idea of the nervous body of the upper-middle classes rests.³²⁹ He concludes:

Such a Course of Life must necessarily beget an Ineptitude of Exercise, and accordingly *Assemblies, Musick Meetings, Plays, Cards and Dice*, are the only Amusements, or perhaps Business follow'd by such Persons as live in the Manner mention'd are most subject to such Complaint, on which all their Thoughts and Attention, nay, their Zeal and Spirits are spent.³³⁰

By linking the originally medical phenomenon of nervous disorders to the social, economic, geographical, and political conditions of the English, Cheyne transforms the so far intangible nervous system of the human body into a visible structure within the body social and national: society is no longer to be understood purely according to its social structure, but also described by its own pathology and dubious excellence. Just as *The English Malady* is critical of an over-refined Georgian society blighted with nervous disorders, it equally applauds what Cheyne sees as the necessary preconditions responsible: "a nation which, more than others, is affected to such a high degree with nervous disorders, must exactly therefore be a very successful nation, featuring the most highly developed standards of civilisation."³³¹

The contradictory idea of ennobling certain members of the body social by pathologising them can only be made to work through the "telling ambivalence"³³² of Cheyne's argument. But this coup was by no means innovative in the discourse of melancholy, since pseudo-Aristotle had already distinguished the individual 'natural' melancholic as intellectually superior.³³³ However, whereas pseudo-Aristotle was fairly specific in his outline of melancholic genius, Cheyne's remarks leave room for his readers' interpretation. It is difficult though to imagine many of his upper-middle-class readers rejecting the intellectual attributes attached them in

³²⁸ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 49f.

³²⁹ Sedlmayr (2007) summarises Cheyne's logical chain of argument, according to which detrimental diet (native or exotic food) destabilises the body, which, in turn, weakens the mind, which finally destabilises as well as defines England's luxury-ridden and over-refined society (see 41).

³³⁰ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 52.

³³¹ Sedlmayr (2007), p. 42.

³³² Sedlmayr (2007), p. 42.

³³³ For a brief discussion of the pseudo-Aristotelian "Problem XXX, I", see Introduction, p. 12.

‘compensation’ for the diseases of excess that their success as a nation had afforded them. Cheyne argues:

Now since this present Age has made Efforts to go beyond former Times, the Arts of *Ingenuity, Invention, Study, Learning* and all the contemplative and sedentary Professions, (I speak only here of our own Nation, our own Times, and the better Sort, whose chief Employments and Studies These are) the Organs of these Faculties being thereby worn and spoil’d, must affect and deaden the whole *System*, and lay a Foundation for the Diseases of Lowness and Weakness. Add to this, that those who are likeliest to excel and apply in this Manner, are most capable, and most in hazard of following that Way of Life which I have mention’d, as the likeliest to produce these Diseases. *Great Wits* are generally great *Epicures*, at least, *Man of Taste*.³³⁴

So far it has been evident that Cheyne’s approach is class-oriented rather than gender-based. However, the question remains as to whether the nervous body social construed in Cheyne’s treatise is indeed ‘ungendered’, or if Cheyne’s ‘English Malady’ is in fact a *female* malady.³³⁵

Although Cheyne later on associates women more overtly with nervous disorders, in general *The English Malady* addresses both sexes alike.³³⁶ However, there is some evidence to be seen that Cheyne subtly links nervous diseases to women or that nervous diseases “were diseases of *effeminacy* – though of effeminate men as well as women.”³³⁷ It will be demonstrated how Cheyne’s discussion of nervous disorders renders parts of the new and affluent body social not just as nervous, sentimental, and delicate, but fundamentally feminine and pathological, and thus as part of the new melancholic femininity.³³⁸

³³⁴ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 54. Based upon this class-based structure of society, he introduces another allegedly “common Division” into “*Quick Thinkers, Slow Thinkers, and No Thinkers*” and explains: “Persons of slender and weak Nerves are generally of the first Class: the Activity, Mobility, and Delicacy of their intellectual Organs make them so, and thereby weakens and relaxes the *Material Organs* of their intellectual Faculties” (182).

³³⁵ The reference of Elaine Showalter’s ground-breaking study *The Female Malady* (1987) to Cheyne’s treatise is, of course, not incidental. Showalter appropriates at least two aspects crucial for her study from Cheyne: firstly, the wider cultural context of a particular English type of madness in England prevalent in the nineteenth and the previous centuries, and secondly, the cultural and medical notion of women being more prone to nervous disorders and lunacy.

³³⁶ See Barker-Benfield (1992), p. 28. Guerrini (2000) reports further that rather than seeking the cure of nervous disorders in sexual intercourse, marriage, and childbirth, Cheyne advises women to gain control over their bodies by maintaining their health. “This”, Guerrini says, “is far from the stereotypical image of the doctor as exploiter of women” (175f.).

³³⁷ Porter (1991), p. xli. In her article, Guerrini (1999) argues that in the course of the eighteenth century women’s role in religion changed to “moral and spiritual caretakers of the family” (279). This change, so Guerrini says, was part of a wider process in which women’s place in society was redefined, and based “on a new definition of female physiology.” In this process, they underwent a transformation “from being primarily physical to being primarily emotional: from body to spirit” (279). To demonstrate this decisive change of women’s place in society and its wider context, Guerrini cross-examines Cheyne’s medical texts and biographical details especially with regard to his penchant for spiritualism and mysticism.

³³⁸ In this context, also see Clark Lawlor’s article “‘Long Grief, dark Melancholy, hopeless natural Love’: *Clarissa*, Cheyne and Narratives of Body and Soul” (2006) in which he relates Richardson’s heroine *Clarissa* to Cheyne’s writings in terms of the new melancholic femininity.

These feminine and pathological features are for Cheyne already tangible in the physiognomy of the nervous body. He provides a detailed description of the physical signs of weak nerves and therefore presents a visible explanation for what has been perceived as invisible: the nervous system. Now written on the afflicted body, it is endowed with outer features and components with an ambiguity that leaves the question of its gender uncertain. With a feeble framework – small boned, rather corpulent and less muscular – the body's frame reflects the weak state of its nerves and fibres.³³⁹ The complexion is "WHITE, fair, blanch'd, wax or ashen-colour'd [...], [and] constantly indicates a weaker State of Fibres, than a ruddy, brown, or dark Hue."³⁴⁰ The light complexion is matched by short and soft hair,³⁴¹ which is "of the fairest, clearest, and brightest"³⁴² colour. All features reflect the tone of the nerves, epitomising feebleness of the body and consequently of the mind. Turning apparent handicaps into positive features, Cheyne holds that those who

Stutter, Stammer, have a great Difficulty of Utterance, speak very Low, lose their Voice without catching a Cold, grow Dumb, Deaf, or Blind, without an Accident or an Acute Distemper; are quick, prompt, and passionate, are all of weak Nerves; have a great Degree of Sensibility; are quick Thinkers, feel Pleasure or Pain the most readily, and are of most lively Imagination.³⁴³

His description is revealing in terms of both gender and melancholy. The nervous body is identified by a multitude of culturally construed feminine attributes that foreshadow the future ideal of female beauty:³⁴⁴ small, fragile, white-skinned, fair, soft – in flesh, hair, and voice.³⁴⁵ Interestingly, this feminine body also carries a number of the traditional features of the melancholic. Some of these features appear to be identical, some diametrically opposite – and still, they assume the same connotations as before. For example, whereas traditionally the melancholic physiognomy tended to be dark and lean,³⁴⁶ Cheyne's nervous body is white, soft, and fat. Yet, both bodies indicate similar kinds of melancholy. Furthermore, since Greek antiquity,

³³⁹ See Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 101f.

³⁴⁰ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 102.

³⁴¹ See Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 100.

³⁴² Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 101.

³⁴³ Cheyne (1733/1991), p. 104f.

³⁴⁴ Porter (1991) continues: "As polite culture increasingly fabricated the fashionable lady as frail, yielding and delicate, it is no wonder that nervous disorders such as the vapours and hysteria became increasingly their prerogative" (xli).

³⁴⁵ In stark contrast, Porter (1991) outlines the masculine attributes of "[h]ealthy nerves and strong muscles [...]: they were strong, hard and resilient; The weak nerves which were such danger sources were, by contrast, soft, languid, or, in other words, feminine" (xli).

³⁴⁶ See Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 57.

melancholics are known to stem and stutter,³⁴⁷ and to have a low and quiet voice – a notion adopted by Cheyne.³⁴⁸ Generally speaking, he incorporates eclectic features of the melancholic in his description of the nervous body, and yet transforms the idea of the former solitary, lonesome, and eccentric melancholic into a designated member of the body social: affluent, sociable, and sentimental.³⁴⁹

Returning to the question of gender within this nervous-melancholic body, it is not only its physiognomy that appears feminine. Scattered throughout the text Cheyne's remarks, especially about menstrual 'irregularities', clearly link nervous disorders to female physiological processes. He accentuates the intersection between the discourses on female melancholy and hysteria by falling back on traditional uterine causes to explain the emergence of nervous disorders in women.

In discussions revolving around the lifestyle and origin of nervous disorders, Cheyne firmly believes that women's weaker nervous constitution makes them more susceptible to the evils of luxurious and colonial (i.e. *non*-English) goods. His recommended therapy is based on a regimen of diet and exercise that targets both sexes.³⁵⁰ However, the diets themselves show gendering traits. Cheyne's main gendering in terms of dietary prescriptions lies in the renunciation of meat eating, "a distinctively masculine activity, and one long associated with passion and violence."³⁵¹ By replacing meat with milk – as in the most severe cases of this volatile disorder – he chooses a diet clearly associated with femininity, woman- and motherhood.

While one of Cheyne's main contributions lies in the positive re-evaluation of nervous disorders, it becomes obvious that his focal points are the specific nervous pathologies of the newly emerging middle classes. In close alignment to the discourses of melancholy, nervous maladies are engendered by the ills of luxury and civilisation, and yet these maladies endow the members of this society with intellectual and emotional superiority, as well as a feminine delicateness of mind and

³⁴⁷ See Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 50.

³⁴⁸ Cheyne's nervous body also bears a similar constitution to the former melancholic's body. "[T]hose naturally of a cold constitution" are more prone to the 'English Malady' than people of a warm and moderate constitution (Cheyne (1733/1991), 103). Again, this also refers to women's 'naturally' cold constitution.

³⁴⁹ See also Porter (1991), p. xxxviii.

³⁵⁰ In a long letter (Aug. 24th, 1741), in which Cheyne (1943) advises Richardson on novel writing, he states: "I know no Difference between the Sexes but in their Configuration. They are both of the same Species and differ only in order as in Number two is after one" (69).

³⁵¹ Guerrini (1999), p. 286.

body. Cheyne's text indicates a general feminization of entire parts of the body social. This crucial shift and inversion of gender and class has to be considered against the background of sensibility and its internalisation of femininity,³⁵² which makes Cheyne's *English Malady* paradigmatic of its time.

Résumé

Cheyne's *English Malady* is 'symptomatic' of the popularised medical discourse of melancholy at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Although Cheyne and Burton still share a set of beliefs about melancholy, their respective notions of the disorder and its discourses could not be more opposed. Between Burton's *Anatomy* and Cheyne's *English Malady*, the medical discourse of melancholy changed from an exclusive, pre-scientific, and professional discourse into a popular-medical one that was well received by a broad, middle-class readership. This process went hand in hand with the changing ways in which knowledge was culturally disseminated (e.g. through the growing book market), which enabled the discourse of melancholy to be more widely received and more easily accessible. However, this change did not prove to be 'empowering' for all members of society: Especially women were relegated to medical case studies, while men benefited as the culturally distinguished 'hypochondriacs'. This process was intricately linked to the paradigmatic shift from the humours to the nerves. With the advent of the nerve paradigm, melancholy started to undergo several radical shifts and gradually diversified up to the point where it seemed to collapse into other nervous disorders, such as hypochondria and hysteria: "the line between melancholy and madness was delicate and thus greatly feared. Melancholy, madness, hysteria, hypochondria, dementia, spleen, vapors, nerves: by 1720 or 1730 all were jumbled and confused with one another as they had never been before."³⁵³

The discursive fragmentation of female melancholy into melancholy and hysteria provided an important background to women's literary access to melancholy. Whereas melancholy had always provided a range of desirable male melancholic subjectivities, women writers of the early eighteenth century lacked this repertoire. With the broader reception of all discourses of melancholy, its feminization and diversification facilitated a wider cultural dissemination of melancholy within the

³⁵² See for example, Barker-Benfield (1992) and the excellent article "Symptomatic Correspondences. The Author's Case in Eighteenth-Century Britain" (1999) by Helen Deutsch.

³⁵³ Rousseau ("Strange Pathology", 1993), p. 153.

emerging sensibility. Women writers increasingly began to negotiate their varying positions in the male-dominated literary tradition of melancholy, and to voice specific self-enhancing poetic expressions of melancholic femininity.

However, since positively connoted melancholic constructions of the feminine self were still missing, early eighteenth-century women writers faced the risk of pathologisation, potentially marginalising them once more as hysterical or melancholic. In the following chapters, the ways in which women writers used discursively allocated spaces in order to appropriate and configurate melancholy as a means of poetic self-representation will be discussed.

2. Poetics of Melancholy

Introduction

As only a fraction of eighteenth-century women writers' verses have so far been classified as 'melancholic', this chapter is aimed at examining the poetics of melancholy texts and at understanding which texts can actually be recognised as 'melancholic' and why.³⁵⁴ By doing so, this chapter will extend our notions of melancholy poetry and include texts which have not been considered in this subgenre before in critical discussion. To that end, I will develop a dynamic typology of melancholy literary writings that will enable us to include different kinds of melancholy poems: those that deal with melancholy on a topical level, e.g. in the form of standardised literary commonplaces, and those that grapple with melancholy on more affective or subtextual levels. This differentiation is, however, not as clear-cut as it might first appear since the individual categories, which I will initially adopt from Matthew Bell,³⁵⁵ greatly overlap and are better understood as a continuum of melancholy writing.

Melancholy is more intimately and systematically linked to literature than a topical approach would suggest. As Wagner-Egelhaaf states:

Melancholy is not a motive of literature like others, e.g. the forest or love, nor is it an 'expression' of the author's sensibility manifested in literature, but the affinity of melancholy and literature can be traced back to their common structures of representation. [...] Because of this, it is the *poetic function of melancholy* that has to be explored: Therefore, it is Melancholy of literature, not melancholy *in* literature.³⁵⁶

Melancholic texts thus emerge from the "common structures of representation" of melancholy and literature, i.e. at the intersection of both discursive phenomena. If we want to classify literary melancholic texts beyond their most obvious thematic representations, it is inevitable that we determine the common ground of melancholy and literature, and to define the literary elements that enable us to recognise literary texts as melancholic.

³⁵⁴ I use the word "writing" synonymously to "text", according to the *OED* meaning of "A written composition; freq. *pl.*, the work or works of an author or group of authors; literary productions" ("writing, *n.*", *OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/230775?rskey=eYVNL9&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>, last visit 16 Feb. 2013).

³⁵⁵ Matthew Bell, "'More than tears and moonlight': Forms of Melancholy Mimesis after Burton" (2011).

³⁵⁶ Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 4; my translation, emphasis in the German original: "Melancholie ist nicht ein Motiv der Literatur wie andere, z.B. der Wald oder die Liebe, auch nicht eine in der Literatur zum 'Ausdruck' gebrachte Befindlichkeit des Autors, sondern die Affinität von Melancholie und Literatur lässt sich auf gemeinsame Strukturen der Repräsentation zurückführen. [...] Daher und weil nach der *literarischen Funktion der Melancholie* gefragt ist: Melancholie *der* Literatur und nicht Melancholie *in* der Literatur."

2.1 Writings about Melancholy and Melancholy Writings

Writings about Melancholy

There have been several attempts to establish a typology for melancholic literature. Early studies such as Reed (1924) and Sickles (1932) read melancholy poetry primarily in terms of topical and poetic configurations of melancholy. In both studies, literary melancholic texts are subliminally defined by their continuous representation of *topoi* and familiar imagery of melancholy. The critical assessment of both Reed's and Sickles's studies is twofold: Although they provide immense amounts of readings, categorisations, and background knowledge especially of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century melancholy poetry, they tend to 'reduce' the genre to its topical representation or, in other words, to its relationship to other non-literary discourses of melancholy (e.g. the medical). Their approach leads to one-sided stereotypes, in which melancholy poetry is perceived as highly formulaic, as it consistently shuffles combinations of the same stock-images (for example moonshine, the owl, the ruin etc.). Nevertheless, a reliable means of recognising texts as melancholic cannot relinquish altogether these established allusions to melancholy. *Qua* definition they refer to both literary as well as non-literary discursive repertoires.

Based on Reed's and Sickles's solid groundwork and more systematic studies such as Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997),³⁵⁷ Matthew Bell has most recently proposed a typology of melancholic writings, wherein he differentiates between non-literary and literary writings on melancholy, and also different literary "modes of melancholy mimesis" in eighteenth-century literature.³⁵⁸ In the following, I shall first adopt and then modify Bell's typology of melancholic writing, which he explicitly develops against an eighteenth-century literary background.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Highly influenced by Schings's (1977) notion of melancholy as an anthropological category, Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997) detects textually manifest contiguities and systematic similarities between eighteenth-century German literature and melancholy. Her study is one of the rare examples where the nexus between melancholy and literature is not restricted to the discussion of topical elements or to speculations about the psychological dispositions of the respective writers. For further discussions of the literary representation of melancholy, see Babb (1951), Gellert Lyons (1981), and Löffler (2005).

³⁵⁸ Bell (2011), p. 53. By "mimesis" Bell refers to a "specifically *formal* mimesis – the attempt to shape literary forms so that they convey melancholy – as distinct form, say, the mimesis of the melancholy temperament on the drama, which is largely to do with putting sentiments into speech" (53). By this, Bell implicitly draws back on the systematic approach of Wagner-Egelhaaf and the idea of textual and structural figurations mirroring melancholy rather than topical representations of it.

³⁵⁹ The history of melancholy poetology is still quite an under-researched field. Although Bell's typology is at times problematic, it is also unrivalled so far.

Bell explains his distinction between “discursive writing and literary writing”³⁶⁰ as follows: “[b]y discursive writing, I mean writing that is characterized by its aboutness: discursive melancholy writing is writing *about* melancholy; and what it says about melancholy is fairly easy to explicate.”³⁶¹ In spite of this simplicity, his terminology is problematic. In particular, the meaning of “discursive” is rather vague in Bell’s text and does not seem to correspond to Foucauldian understandings of the term nor to the idea that literature itself is considered discursive in this study. In want of a better word, I understand Bell’s “discursive” as ‘non-literary.’

Apart from this initial distinction between ‘discursive’ and ‘literary’, Bell further divides literary melancholic writings into “literary-discursive” and a second subcategory, which remains unnamed, but which plays an important role in his typology.³⁶² Since I take Bell’s proposition as a dynamic typology of melancholic writing rather than as a set of rigid categories, I shall dwell a little longer on Bell’s “discursive melancholy writings,” and thus explore the literary core of this first category.

“Discursive Melancholy Writings”

According to Bell, this category is primarily characterised by its apparent “aboutness”. He includes medical treatises such as Timothy Bright’s *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) (and those discussed in chapter one). However, he neglects to refer to the strong interrelatedness and reciprocity of eighteenth-century medical and literary discourses,³⁶³ but correctly points out that melancholy is *per se* highly metaphorical and as such an established constituent of literature. Hence, Bell’s categories are rather instable from the very beginning.

The reciprocal relationship between early modern medical and literary representations of melancholy has often been discussed in the context of the doctrine of the four humours and its gradual demise. As “scientific propositions become especially susceptible to literary treatment at the point where they lose their validity in science,”³⁶⁴ black bile has had an immense impact on the literary imagery of

³⁶⁰ Bell (2011), p. 55.

³⁶¹ Bell (2011), p. 55.

³⁶² See below, p. 81.

³⁶³ See Introduction, FN 9.

³⁶⁴ Gellert Lyons (1981), p. xiii. At a different point in her study, Gellert Lyons extends her argument by identifying melancholy’s double nature as an immanent reason for literature’s interest in melancholy: “[...] it was a physical and psychological condition that expressed an orientation to the world and society – and this made it particularly susceptible to literary treatment” (1). Both Babb’s (1951) and

melancholy to the point where its medical and literary categories became increasingly blurred and hard to distinguish. Black bile and its associated characteristics and symptoms provided a rich source of potential imagery for subsequent medical and literary appropriation. Moreover, since melancholy signified a specific mental disorder caused by a surplus of black bile, it produced further symptoms and associations which found their way into a range of literary *topoi*: “The black bile produced dreams and visions connected with death and evil spirits, with night and with graveyards, and with the plants, animals or other objects that represented or embodied these.”³⁶⁵

Subsequently, black bile enjoyed a highly metaphorical status – in literature as well as in medical lore. Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl observed that due to an enforced conformity to the humoral scheme, the empirical status of black bile had already been at stake in ancient Greek medical writings:

At the outset – though later [the theory of the four humours were] to become almost canonical it could only be established with the help of two quite arbitrary assumptions. The blood had to be included in the system, although it was not in fact a surplus humour; and in the bile, which hitherto had been regarded as a single fluid, or else split down into sub-species, it was necessary to distinguish two independent ‘humours’, the yellow bile (χολη νεαθη), and the black bile (μελαια χολη = μελαγχολια).³⁶⁶

More recently, Bader has argued that the word black bile – or μελαγχολία – itself is “incurably metaphoric.”³⁶⁷ Thus, melancholy signifies a highly conspicuous medical as well as literary phenomenon: “Only melancholy invokes an empirical substrate which is notoriously non-existent. I.e.: constitutive irredeemability of the word during continuous existence of exactly this word. The sensual concretion proves to be a mock-concretion.”³⁶⁸

The degree of melancholy’s metaphorical potency increases through the course of its different traditions. The decline of humoralism and the establishment of nervous

Gellert Lyons’s studies explicitly show that the stereotyping of melancholy in literary texts is by no means a phenomenon restricted to the eighteenth century, but was already emerging in sixteenth – and seventeenth-century English literature. Following Babb’s argument of the different literary and cultural types of melancholy (above all the ‘malcontent’ in his habitual attire and behaviour), Gellert Lyons provides not only an overview of the literary uses of melancholy in early-modern drama and some detailed readings, but aims at illuminating the complex relationship between these literary stereotypes and melancholy as a medical, philosophical, and cultural concept.

³⁶⁵ Gellert Lyons (1971), p. 44.

³⁶⁶ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 9.

³⁶⁷ Bader (1990), p. 22; my translation, German original: “unheilbar metaphorisch”.

³⁶⁸ Bader (1990), p. 21, my translation, German original: “Nur die Melancholie beruft sich auf ein empirisches Substrat, dass es notorisch nicht gibt. Das ist: konstitutive Nichteinlösbarkeit des Wortes bei fortdauerndem Vorhandensein ebendieses Wortes. Seine sinnliche Konkretion erweist sich als Scheinkonkretion.” Also see Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 17; and Starobinski (1963/2005), p. 24.

explanations fostered this increase until melancholy lost its medical reference point and turned into an 'empty' metaphor in the course of the seventeenth century.³⁶⁹ Although melancholy's primary reference as a humoral imbalance becomes increasingly invalid, it is by then fully established as a medical and cultural-literary phenomenon that ultimately refers to its discursive, metaphorical nature.

This discussion about the immanent 'literary' core of melancholy that is inherent in so called non-literary discourses, already shows that Bell's typology must be read as a fundamentally permeable, and dynamic system. Put another way, there is no literary melancholy writing that is not related non-literary traditions of melancholy in one way or another.

Literary Writings of Melancholy

Based upon the first distinction between "discursive" and literary melancholy texts, Bell further distinguishes between a "literary-discursive" category of melancholy writing, which "makes reference to the discursive tradition of melancholy and does so from within a conventional literary form,"³⁷⁰ and a "second form of literary writing [which] seems wholly or in large parts written [...] from or in or under a spirit of melancholy, such that the writing's form becomes a mimesis of melancholy."³⁷¹ Again, Bell's choice of terms is rather problematic. His intended meaning of "discursive" has become additionally blurred with the introduction of a "literary-discursive" category for melancholy texts.

However, since most definitions of melancholy poetry implicitly refer to this category, drawing back on a repertoire of melancholic *topoi* and imagery, it shall be discussed in more detail.

"Literary-Discursive" Melancholy Writings

Clearly informed by Bell's category of "discursive" melancholy writing, "literary-discursive" melancholy texts explicitly refer to non-literary discourses of melancholy. The most paradigmatic example of this subcategory is possibly Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with its strong intertextual ties to Bright's *Treatise on Melancholie*.³⁷² This text easily

³⁶⁹ See Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 24.

³⁷⁰ Bell (2011), p. 56.

³⁷¹ Bell (2011), p. 56.

³⁷² See Bell (2011), p. 56. As will be shown below, *Hamlet* is a viable example for both literary categories, see p. 82.

epitomises the inter-relational character of non-literary and literary discourses of melancholy.

Melancholy delivers a multitude of stock images, symbols, and motives that are often related to black bile and its associated properties. For example, the humour's dark colour evokes metaphorical representations of the night and night animals (owls, bats).³⁷³ Animals that have been considered emblematic for solitude (hares, deer) and for black magic (cats, dogs) also belong to the repertoire of melancholic imagery.³⁷⁴ Additionally, the melancholic's intense pondering upon death is represented by graveyard imagery (tombs, cypresses, yew trees),³⁷⁵ and further transformed into well-known *memento mori* and *vanitas*-motives such as ruins, the hourglass, bones, and skulls. Both night and graveyard imagery provide a rich supply of 'stage props' that serve to highlight the performative aspect of melancholy, as can be frequently observed in *Hamlet*.

In terms of a display of the alleged melancholic's self in the fine arts, melancholy's inherent performativity is most palpably observed in specific gestures epitomised in Dürer's highly influential etching *Melencolia I* (1514), which are later developed into literary 'props'. The heavy head of the figure resting on the propped up arm, the eyes alternatively averted or looking to heaven in rapture turn into popular metaphorical gestures within literary texts.³⁷⁶

Although we may consider this imagery to be faded, and the literary texts that overuse it to be formulaic, such imagery is a necessary constituent of literary melancholic writing, since it creates recognizable references to its various traditions. In other words, the literary usage of melancholy imagery provides both a link between different discourses of melancholy, and an imagery that is highly dependent on a pictorial tradition within the non-literary discourses. Thus, the "topical formulaicity," as Wagner-Egelhaaf phrases it,³⁷⁷ of specific melancholic literary images and medical symptoms provide self-referential markers in literary texts, and help to make them identifiable as melancholic.

³⁷³ See Gellert Lyons (1971), p. 44.

³⁷⁴ See Gellert Lyons (1971), p. 44.

³⁷⁵ See Gellert Lyons (1971), p. 44.

³⁷⁶ Melancholic gestures have been understood to perform the subjective, individual mental state of the melancholic and are subsequently read, recognised, and reproduced by the collective. This is, for instance, relevant in the analysis of early modern drama and its representation of melancholy and the melancholic character type, e.g. the malcontent. Babb (1951) focuses on exactly those dramatic representations and establishes seminal links between discursive, esp. medical, and literary melancholy texts in early modern England.

³⁷⁷ Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 197f, my translation, German original: "topische Formelhaftigkeit".

Formal-Experiential Melancholy Writings

Bell's other subcategory of literary melancholy writing is left unnamed: "The second form of literary writing seems wholly or in large part written [...] from or in or under a spirit of melancholy, such that the writing's form becomes a mimesis of melancholy."³⁷⁸ For the want of a better term, I refer to this category as *formal-experiential* literary melancholy writing, since it includes literary texts that represent melancholy on a textual-structural level and that negotiate the aestheticised experience of melancholy.

Although Bell refers to Burton's *Anatomy*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Keats's "Ode to Melancholy" as his prime examples³⁷⁹ – texts which all visibly grapple with melancholy – I consider this category particularly useful, since it allows us to include literary texts in our discussion that negotiate melancholy not necessarily in terms of topical representations (what Bell would refer to as "discursive" elements), but rather on subtextual levels. Bell observes: "It is in the nature of the mimesis of melancholy that it breaks with what one might call the iconographical tradition of literary melancholy – graveyards, caves, owls, and the 'tears and the moonlight' [...] – and in the process finds new poetic forms."³⁸⁰ Eighteenth-century women writers whose contribution to the literary tradition of melancholy is still undefined could benefit from a typology such as Bell's, as it would allow for a more differentiated notion of melancholy, one that is dynamic rather than static and that does not rely solely on topical representations as a marker for melancholy.

Bell's emphasis on the mimesis of melancholy implicitly draws on Wagner-Egelhaaf's systematic approach to literary melancholic writing, and her understanding of "common structures of representation" of melancholy and literature in terms of content, structure, and system-based interrelatedness.³⁸¹ Wagner-

³⁷⁸ Bell (2011), p. 56. He continues: "The formal mimesis of melancholy is something that I think first becomes widespread in the eighteenth century" (56).

³⁷⁹ Both pioneer text and prime example, Bell introduces Burton's *Anatomy* as origin of formal-experiential literary melancholy writing due to its formal as well as topical versatility and defiance: "Although of course the *Anatomy* is also and at first sight a discursive text about melancholy, in the eighteenth century it was read both ways: as a text about melancholy, and as a text written from or in or under melancholy" (56).

³⁸⁰ Bell (2011), p. 56f.

³⁸¹ Resulting from the intersections of literature and melancholy, Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997) defines melancholic texts by an aesthetic function, which she establishes *via* Roman Jakobson's structuralist concept of the poetic function of the literary text (12f.). In other words, she reveals a 'melancholic function' that determines literary melancholic texts through the projection of equivalence from the

Egelhaaf develops a loosely joined repertoire of textual configurations that emerge from the contiguity of literature and melancholy and that imitate melancholy's characteristic features. The following examples of prominent structural representations of melancholy will help to clarify Bell's idea of mimesis.

Analogous to the discussion of melancholic *topoi*, black bile plays an important role in the formal mimesis of melancholy in literary texts. On the one hand, black bile is an indispensable element of the system of the four humours. On the other hand, it has a metaphorical origin and describes its own deviation, or its own crisis. Melancholy and its discourses show a similar tendency to dualities and binaries: the medical and the philosophical tradition, melancholy and mania, pathology and culture etc.³⁸² This binary structure becomes strikingly vivid in Eckhard and Verena Lobsien's reading of Hamlet's famous monologue "To be, or not to be", in which they unfold the text's inherent structure of questioning and re-questioning, of suggesting an option and re-suggesting its opposite.³⁸³ The literary text imitates at least two major structural elements of melancholy: the binary configuration of melancholy's tradition and the circular rumination of the melancholic's mind.³⁸⁴ The intricate ways of the pensive and ruminating mind of the melancholic have offered a multitude of literary structures that imitate melancholy. In my view, any single 'symptom' of melancholy from the many available could potentially provide a source of literary representation (either structurally or as an image). While this can incur a high degree of versatility, it can also introduce the risk of over-interpretation of literary texts as melancholic.³⁸⁵

Besides the formal mimesis of melancholy, it is the aestheticised experience of melancholy that Bell considers to be the defining element for this particular subcategory of literary melancholy writing. Despite Bell's own preference for formal mimesis, I will separate these two characteristics and focus on the literary

axis of selection (paradigmatic) into the axis of combination (syntagmatic) (see Jakobson (1960), p. 358). More precisely, melancholic texts are equally defined by both their melancholic content (selection) and their melancholic structure (combination). Bell's and Wagner-Egelhaaf's mutual interest in a formal representation of melancholy ultimately suggests a double self-reflexivity of the literary melancholy text: on the one hand, literary texts reflect on their own literariness through the structural devices; on the other hand, these structural devices mirror their melancholic nature and thus reflect themselves in their 'melancholiness'.

³⁸² Also see Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 196f.

³⁸³ See Lobsien and Lobsien (2003), p. 298ff.

³⁸⁴ Other examples are circulatory and spiral writings that belong to this group and are, for instance, prominent in Burton's prefixed poem "The Author's Abstract of Melancholy", and in Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", which will be discussed below in chap. 3.1, p. 93.

³⁸⁵ This is, of course, a reciprocal process as literary texts also provides a repertoire of melancholy images and ideas which has been adopted for medical texts.

representation of melancholy experience for several reasons: Firstly, melancholy experience does not necessarily draw back on “literary-discursive” and formal elements of melancholy. Although there have to be some melancholic markers to perceive the poem as ‘melancholic’ – again the categories of this typology are dynamic, not static – the focus on the melancholy experience extends the quantity of literary texts that could be read as melancholic on subtextual or more affective levels. Secondly, I argue that the melancholy experience forms a crucial constituent for the construction of a ‘melancholic self,’ and that in an aestheticised form it also assists in the construction of the ‘poetic-melancholic’ self of a literary text. Here then, the ‘poetic-melancholic’ self serves as a vital marker of literary melancholy texts. Moreover, as will be shown in later chapters, the ‘poetic-melancholic’ self can assume a variety of constitutions via melancholy’s experiential diversity. In what follows, I will outline the complex process of constructing a ‘poetic-melancholic’ self through the experience of melancholy, and will introduce the first of two types of poetic self-construction prevalent in this study.³⁸⁶

The Melancholic Self and the Melancholy Experience

The first type of poetic self is constituted through the experience of melancholy. This type reflects itself in a “radically disengaged” manner,³⁸⁷ and thus emerges as the central voice within literary melancholy texts. In an early eighteenth-century context, this idea of the self is in agreement with Charles Taylor’s notion of an increasingly self-reflective and disengaged subject (i.e. disengaged from the world and its experiences), which culminates in John Locke’s “punctual self.” Based on the Cartesian idea of the self and its rational control over itself, Taylor’s reading of Locke extends this idea of disengagement not just to the world (as in Descartes’s thinking), but also “towards the subject himself.”³⁸⁸ The subject that is able to objectify and

³⁸⁶ As will be demonstrated in chap. 3.2, the constitution of the melancholic self, as a punctual self and thus a self beyond its social ties, is a crucial element for the melancholy writings by women writers in this study.

³⁸⁷ See Taylor (1989), p. 171.

³⁸⁸ Taylor (1989), p. 161. According to Taylor, Locke’s idea of a radical disengagement from the world and from one’s self is based on two main premises: the rejection of any kind of teleology of human nature (in terms of knowledge and morality) and the general belief in a fully objectified, mechanistic world. The first refers to Locke’s rejection “of definitions of the human subject in terms of some inherent bent to the truth or the good, which might justify an engaged exploration of the true tendencies of our nature” (164). In contrast to Descartes, Locke refuses to believe in any innate ideas of the human. The second premise concerns the ways in which we gain knowledge (about ourselves and the world) or “to get the way things really are [...]” (168). For this it is important to demolish and rebuild beliefs, which we have previously acquired (through the synthesis of sensation and reflection), under the influence of education or passion and which we have believed to be true (see 165). By

disengage itself to such an utmost extent is that which Taylor defines as the Lockean punctual self:

The subject who can take this kind of radical disengagement to himself or herself with a view of remaking, is what I want to call the 'punctual' self. To take this stance is to identify oneself with the power to objectify and remake, and by this act to distance oneself from all the particular features which are objects of potential change. What we are is essentially none of the latter, but what finds itself capable of fixing them and working on them. This is what the image of the point is meant to convey, drawing on the geometrical term: the real self is "extensionless" it is nowhere but in this power to fix things as objects.³⁸⁹

The ultimate aim of this radical disengagement and objectification of the punctual self is, according to Taylor, the gain of rational control over the outside world, and, what is more, over one's self. Having objectified itself and disengaged from the world, radical reflection of the self is possible. The 'punctual self' is then able to rationally control its own radical reconstruction, independent of its desires, passions, and other influences. As Taylor puts it: "Radical disengagement opens the prospect of self-making."³⁹⁰

By analogy, the melancholic self and the punctual self intersect at two crucial points: they both constitute themselves in the process of disengagement and self-reflection. Thus, the punctual and the melancholic self can almost be considered alternative selves to each other or two sides of the same coin. However, whereas the punctual self strives for rational control over the world and for the mental ability to remake itself, the melancholic self loses this rational control when disengaged from the world. In a fatal combination with melancholy, the self is captured and permanently restrained within the melancholy experience. Thus constituted through the melancholy experience, it can only reflect and remake itself under the auspices of this specific psychological state, and is acutely aware of its own limitations and thus unable to transcend itself.³⁹¹ Due to its *quasi*-disengaged and reflective stance, the melancholic self always reflects upon itself and the world from within the melancholy experience.

disengaging self-reflection and the subsequent abandonment of these beliefs, we reify our minds to such an extent that we gain an "understanding of things [that] is constructed out of the building blocks of simple ideas" (166). Disengaged, and hence ideally free from the influences of education or passion, we thus mechanistically rebuild ourselves working block by working block.

³⁸⁹ Taylor (1989), p. 171f.

³⁹⁰ Taylor (1989), p. 171.

³⁹¹ Verena and Eckhard Lobsien (2003) also stress the limitedness of the melancholic, by which the melancholic self is only enabled through its melancholy – a process which leads in turn to more melancholy and deeper despair (see 295).

Pivotal to the construction of the 'poetic-melancholic' self is its disengagement from the world and its experience of melancholy. But what do we actually mean by melancholy experience? While Bell does not explicate the term any further (apart from insisting on its importance), I will try to delineate it through a phenomenological approach based on Ratcliffe (2010).³⁹² This key discussion will provide the foundation for both types of self-representation: the 'poetic-melancholic' and relational-melancholic self, both of which hinge on the idea of the melancholy experience.

In his article, Ratcliffe argues that moods create the specific contexts in which we experience both the world and ourselves. They "constitute the various different ways in which we are able to experience things as *matter*ing."³⁹³ Different kinds of emotions invoke different contexts for the interpretation of experience; mood thus structures or "determines the space of possible kinds of concern."³⁹⁴ In other words, mood provides the phenomenological background against which we define and experience our emotional responses.

Against the notion of mood as "a background sense of belonging to a meaningful world, a condition of possibility for having intentional states [i.e. emotions; S.B.],"³⁹⁵ Ratcliffe continues to distinguish three different kinds or levels of emotional states and moods, depending on their depth and intensity. Depth and intensity increase with the different levels, i.e. the second is 'deeper' than the first, the third deeper than the second.³⁹⁶ According to Ratcliffe's scheme, the first level refers to a state in which one feels melancholy about something. It is an intentional or conscious emotional state in which one feels melancholic "about a specific state of affairs."³⁹⁷ This would for instance include literary and non-literary examples, in which particular objects such as landscape or music, engender a transitory emotion of sadness and melancholy, which usually abates after a time.

³⁹² See Matthew Ratcliffe's article "The Phenomenology of Mood and the Meaning of Life" (2010).

³⁹³ Ratcliffe (2010), p. 355.

³⁹⁴ Ratcliffe (2010), p. 356.

³⁹⁵ Ratcliffe (2010), p. 356.

³⁹⁶ To explicate his models, Ratcliffe uses Heidegger's well-known analysis of boredom and Richard Garrett's example of despair respectively. Not only because of the topical proximity to the last example, but due to flexibility of the model, Ratcliffe's tripartite distinction can be applied to melancholy in order to illustrate the experience of it. For the example of boredom, see Ratcliffe (2010), pp. 357-358; for the example of despair, see p. 359.

³⁹⁷ Ratcliffe (2010), p. 359.

Already deeper than the first and shifting from an emotion towards a mood,³⁹⁸ the second level consists of being melancholy over one's own situation and life. Although the possibility of alternative states of being is still thinkable, this mood (or background structure) is "phenomenologically deeper"³⁹⁹ and, above all, structures how one experiences one's own life and situation: it is the melancholic form of sadness, despair, and fear. The melancholy experienced in this particular mood is still restricted to one's own life. This changes with the third level, which consists of a mood in which one experiences not only one's own life as melancholic, but the entire world including everyone and everything within it. Phenomenologically, this is the deepest state in which every conscious experience is immersed. It is the ultimate melancholic experience in which "[t]he world is experienced through the sadness. It is how one finds oneself in the world rather than an emotion that one has within the world."⁴⁰⁰

What does this mean for the construction of poetic selves through the melancholy experience? I argue that poetic selves turn into 'poetic-melancholic' selves, if they experience and express this mood in an aestheticised way, independently of the degree or severity of the melancholy emotion or mood experienced by the self. I do not deny that different literary melancholy texts convey different experiences of melancholy to different degrees of intensity. Neither do I deny that the literary quality of these texts is at times related to the profoundness of the conveyed experience: some appear 'deeper', appear to encompass the totality of the emotion, others appear 'shallower' and melancholy is restricted to an object or sad incident. The fact that the poetic self is exposed to the melancholy experience and poetically transforms it is sufficient to regard it as a 'poetic-melancholic' self. The actual experience is therefore more important than its phenomenological depth, since the latter is often inaccessible.

Literary texts that negotiate and represent this experience of and through a poetic self aestheticise it to different degrees and hence reveal the imaginative processes generated under this experience. The poetic worlds created within the boundaries of this experience are images of the melancholic self's world and mirror its interior set-up.

³⁹⁸ "Emotions are, for the most part, intentional states [...]. Moods, in contrast, are presupposed possibility spaces that we find ourselves in" (Ratcliffe (2010), p. 358f.).

³⁹⁹ Ratcliffe (2010), p. 358.

⁴⁰⁰ Ratcliffe (2010), p. 360.

The construction of a melancholic self through the melancholy experience is a significant criterion, especially in the context of early eighteenth-century women poets and their ambivalent position within the discourses of melancholy. In accepting the concept of the melancholic self (as part of the melancholy experience), a question is raised concerning literary aestheticisation. Poetry or, to be precise, lyric poetry, seems *qua* definition to be somewhat more prone to melancholy than other literary genres.⁴⁰¹ How melancholy and poetry intersect in relation to the category of the self, and the effects of melancholy poetry will be discussed in the following.

2.2 Melancholy and Poetry

Intersections and Effects

It has often been claimed that melancholy and poetry have a markedly close, almost 'natural' kinship.⁴⁰² Critics refer to the (alleged) extraordinary affinity of melancholy and poetry in order to emphasise their common reflective, introspective, and subjective modes.

As a tradition beginning with the late middle ages, literary genres affined to melancholy are those "which tended essentially to observe and to represent man's sensibility as having a value in itself – that is in lyric, in narrative poetry, and also in prose romances."⁴⁰³ The affinity between melancholy and poetry is, thus, closely related to the genesis of the (modern) self and of subjectivity.⁴⁰⁴

In the following, I will briefly illuminate two different aspects of the apparent kinship between poetry and melancholy: the problem of self-reflexivity⁴⁰⁵ and the reading dimension of melancholic poems. These aspects do not only clarify the intricate relationship between melancholy and poetry, but will also serve as further analytical categories in my readings of melancholy poetry in later chapters.

⁴⁰¹ This does not, however, imply that other literary genres cannot be 'melancholic'. Nor does the labelling of a literary text as 'melancholic' exclude other generic classifications (e.g. friendship poem). There are certainly genres which appear to share more properties or features with, melancholy poetry in general, e.g. elegies. This diversity and contiguity makes it more difficult to establish a valid definition of a melancholy subgenre as exclusive, but enables a more dynamic conception.

⁴⁰² See e.g. Radden (2000), pp. 8, 29f.; Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 24. The literary critic and philosopher Anselm Haverkamp (1988) calls melancholy "the anthropomorphism of poetry" and highlights melancholy's vital function within poetic texts (377).

⁴⁰³ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 217.

⁴⁰⁴ It is, for instance, also related to the development of the so-called poetic melancholy, a specifically literary tradition of melancholy which has been briefly discussed above, see Introduction, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁵ Lobsien (1998) also discusses reflexivity as a central feature of melancholy poetry, see p. 713.

The Problem of Self-Reflexivity

One of the great intersections of lyric poetry and melancholy is the speaking and experiencing subject – a subject that needs to “be approached not as the point of origin but as the effect of a poetic discourse,” as Easthope has stated.⁴⁰⁶ By analogy, the ‘poetic-melancholic’ self is constituted in the course of lyrical melancholic poetry from the expression and negotiation of its experiences of melancholy. The process of aestheticising and representing melancholy is hence the core of the constitution of both the poetic-melancholic self and melancholy poetry as a distinct subgenre.

Despite the availability of more recent research of speaking subjects within poetic texts,⁴⁰⁷ I will draw on Hühn’s concept (1995) of the poem’s subjects, since it offers interesting tie-ins with melancholic texts. Fundamentally, Hühn proposes a differentiation between the “subject of the enounced” and the “subject of enunciation”.⁴⁰⁸ Although intimately related, intertwined, and sometimes identical, both subjects signify fundamentally different positions in terms of the poetic text. While the first represents the “direct [...], dramatic [...] (self-) expression of the speaker *within* the poem,” the latter refers to the subject of “the act of composition of the poem as such, that produces, or stages, this expression in a text that pursues specific aims.”⁴⁰⁹

Melancholy poetry tends to enhance the union of Hühn’s two subjects. As such it “[...], observes the world, and, [...], observes itself how it does so. I.e. it concentrates its attention, its consciousness on its own reactions to its surroundings and reflects upon itself.”⁴¹⁰ Provided both aspects of formal-experiential melancholy writing are equally carried out, the structural representation of melancholy (what Bell calls its formal mimesis), would then be assigned to Hühn’s subject of enunciation since it

⁴⁰⁶ Easthope (1983), p. 31.

⁴⁰⁷ In “Empirischer Autor, Impliziter Autor und Lyrisches Ich” (1999), Jörg Schönert presents a useful overview of different approaches to the speaking subjects of poetic texts. A later and updated version of the article can be found online, http://www.icn.uni-hamburg.de/webfm_send/40; last visit 18 Aug. 2012.

⁴⁰⁸ Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁹ Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 13; my translation; emphasis in the German originals: “direkte [...], dramatische [...] (Selbst-)Aussage des Sprechers *innerhalb* des Gedichtes”; “Kompositionsakt *des* Gedichts als solchem, der diese Aussage in Form eines mit bestimmten Zielen eingerichteten Textes erst hervorbringt, sozusagen inszeniert”. Accordingly, Easthope (1983) differentiates between “the *enounced* (*énoncé*, the narrated event), the *enunciation* (*énonciation*, the speech event); *subject of the enounced* (the participant of the narrated event); *subject of the enunciation* (the participant of the speech event, the speaking subject, the producer of meaning)” (42).

⁴¹⁰ Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 14; my translation; German original: “wenn diese [Person] nämlich einerseits die Welt beobachtet, andererseits sich selbst dabei beobachtet, wie sie dies tut. D.h. sie richtet ihre Aufmerksamkeit, ihr Bewußtsein auf ihre eigenen Reaktionen der Umwelt und reflektiert über sich selbst”.

strategically stages structural melancholic elements within the text. The ‘poetic-melancholic’ self, by contrast, embodies the subject of the enounced since it expresses its melancholic experience (i.e. thoughts, emotions, ideas etc.). The very fact that both of Hühn’s subjects thus express melancholy in their own distinct manner, either as a subjective experience or as a textual event, manifests itself most visibly in the close interplay of the poem’s structure and content.⁴¹¹

If self-reflexivity is a dominant mutual structure of both melancholy and lyric poetry, does this imply that all highly self-reflexive poems are *per se* melancholic? This question demonstrates that melancholy undoubtedly shares a connection with self-reflexivity in poetic texts. However, the difference between self-reflexive and melancholic poems is that the latter gains its ‘melancholiness’ only by reflecting the subjective experience of melancholy – and not by reflecting alone.

‘Melancholizing’ the Reader

Another specific feature of melancholy poetry is its performative effect on the reader – melancholic texts ‘melancholize’ the reader. Whereas Burton uses the verb in its intransitive form denoting a state of being or becoming melancholy or musing in a melancholy fashion,⁴¹² the *OED* also notes an (by now obsolete) transitive usage which mainly occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: “to make melancholy.”⁴¹³ It is this latter usage that describes the effect of melancholy poetry best: it engenders melancholy in the act of reading.

The challenge of delineating the effects of melancholy poetry in a plausible way can be approached from different angles, for instance, through affective theories of poetry or through concepts of cultural mediology. As is well known, affective

⁴¹¹ It is surely no coincidence that Hühn discusses such a union in the context of Milton’s “Il Penseroso”, a poem which is not only highly self-reflexive, but equally melancholic (also see below chap. 3.1, p. 93). Of course, this phenomenon of reciprocity is neither restricted to poetry in general, nor melancholy poetry in particular, as Wagner-Egelhaaf’s (1997) and Bell’s (2011) analyses of various prose works of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers clearly demonstrate. However, against the background of their mutually shared properties, (e.g. self-reflexivity, introspection, and the strong focus on the self), and due to lyric poetry’s specific focus on the speaking subject as well as the strong echoes between content and structure within both poetry and melancholy, this specific form of interplay – the collapsing of the subject of the enounced into the subject of enunciation and vice versa – manifests itself as a specific feature and hence one possible identifying characteristic of melancholy poems.

⁴¹² See for instance, Burton’s often-quoted preface in which he marvels about the dangers of solitude: “A most incomparable delight it is so to melancholize, and build castles in the air,[...]” (Burton (1621/2001), pt. I, p. 246).

⁴¹³ “melancholize, *v.*” *OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/116006?redirectedFrom=melancholize#eid>; last visit 17 Aug. 2012.

theories of poetry were virulently discussed during the eighteenth century.⁴¹⁴ More abstract, medium-related approaches (for instance, Koschorke (1999)), provide different instruments which highlight the materiality and mediality of the written texts and by which I attempt to delineate the ‘melancholizing’ effect of melancholy poems.⁴¹⁵

Koschorke’s argument is predicated on the idea of the oral and rhetoric tradition losing its cultural supremacy and literature advancing to become *the* medium of the otherwise non-communicable: privacy, (physical) absence and interiority.⁴¹⁶ In this process, literary texts do not only simulate an immediate orality or substitute the (absent) interlocutor, but transform the absent other into the written text. Emphasising the spiritual interior self of the absent other, his or her physical body is completely suppressed.⁴¹⁷ Following from this, literary texts perform a kind of ‘medial substitution’ of the absent body by creating a metonymical relation in which the ink comes to represent the absent other’s physical existence or, for instance, his or her tears.⁴¹⁸

Koschorke’s theory of substitution can be applied to the writing and reading of melancholic texts. Whereas sentimental texts substitute ink for tears, the metonymical nature of melancholy and ink is even more evident. In melancholy texts, ink represents black bile of the melancholic absent other (i.e. the poetic-melancholic self of the text), and also resembles black bile in its dark colour. Melancholy thus manifests itself and materialises its original fluid, black bile, in the black ink of the literary writing. In return, the text, through its mediated materiality, engenders melancholy or ‘melancholizes’ the reader. The reader thus is flooded by melancholy’s black ink and bile.

⁴¹⁴ For eighteenth-century affective theory of poetry, see first and foremost Joseph Addison’s “Essays on the Pleasure of Imagination” in *The Spectator* no. 411-421.

⁴¹⁵ In *Körperströme und Schriftverkehr. Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1999); esp. chap. 2, 3, 5, and 6. Albrecht Koschorke presents his narrative of the development of a substitution-theory of eighteenth-century sentimental writing as a cultural practice. “Alphabetisation und Empfindsamkeit” (1994) anticipates Koschorke’s study and presents the core of his theory in a more condensed manner. His research concentrates on the second half of the eighteenth century, especially on the cult of sensibility. In 1994, he argued that in the context of an extensive process of literacy and the establishment of a printing culture, writing, and reading – and subsequently the literary text as a medium – received fundamentally new functions (See 605f.).

⁴¹⁶ See Koschorke (1994), pp. 606f.

⁴¹⁷ See Koschorke (1994), p. 609. Although Koschorke focuses in his example on the extremely popular sentimental practice of letter writing, he validates his theory with regard to all alternative (literary) forms of writing (see 611).

⁴¹⁸ See Koschorke (1994), pp. 618f.

The triple nexus of melancholy, writing, and black (bilious) ink is a well-established *topos* beyond Koschorke's theory of metonymical substitution. Wagner-Egelhaaf, for instance, states with regard to writing and the mediality of melancholy: "Writing itself is, unread, pure material and is as such closely related to the earth-bound that became a topical characteristic of melancholy."⁴¹⁹ It is not only topical since the inkpot belongs to the traditional iconographical elements of Dürer's famous *Melencolia I*,⁴²⁰ but because writing itself unifies the material side of melancholy with its poetic expression (or the poetic voice) which itself is in some cases on the brink of silence. From this perspective, the substitution (or equation) of black bile and ink is enriched by the melancholic self's tears that express the loss of the poetic voice.

Résumé

Bell's typology and the constitution of the different types of poetic melancholic selves set the theoretical scene for the readings of the different in the following chapters. It will become obvious that the first type, the poetic-melancholic self, constitutes itself in both categories of melancholy literary writings, i.e. "literary-discursive" as well as "formal-experiential" literary texts. Chapter three will demonstrate in more detail how this type of the 'poetic-melancholic' self manifests itself in the highly ambivalent melancholy poems of early eighteenth-century women writers.⁴²¹

The second type of poetic-melancholic selves, i.e. the relational-melancholic self, is by definition bound to the formal-experiential literary texts. This will be further explored in Chapter four.

A small caveat is in place: the defining characteristics of literary melancholy writings addressed above do not have to be precisely matched in every aspect before writings can be identified as melancholy. Also, as the following readings and analyses will demonstrate, the literary melancholy texts are as mutable as the phenomenon they grapple with, which makes the reading of literary melancholy writings more complex, but all the more rewarding.

⁴¹⁹ Wagner-Egelhaaf (1997), p. 206; my translation; German original: "Die Schrift selbst ist, ungelesen, reine Materie und steht als solche der erdenschwere Dingverbundenheit nahe, die zum topischen Merkmal der Melancholie geworden ist." Also see Stierle (1995), p. 144. Löffler (2005) develops the same nexus via Derrida's essay "Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book", see pp. 12-23.

⁴²⁰ See Starobinski (1963/2005), p. 29.

⁴²¹ The second type of poetic-melancholic self-construction will be discussed in more detail in chap. 4.2.

3. Poetic Figurations Of Melancholy

Introduction

Against the background of the typology previously outlined, this chapter will focus on the cultural practice and literary figurations of melancholy in the early eighteenth century. It aims at establishing a literary framework of melancholy poetry, in order to delineate the development of the literary tradition of melancholy during the first half of the long eighteenth century. In turn, literary contexts will emerge in which melancholy writings of Augustan women poets can be assessed. The diversity of women's melancholy texts can then be highlighted *via* the differentiation of the common notions of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, which appear too limited in this respect.

The temporal and literary frame for the exploration of melancholy writings is set by John Milton's companion poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (both 1645) and Thomas Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" (1751). These well-known examples serve as literary "prototypes" of melancholy poetry.⁴² Taken collectively, they indicate the changes within this literary tradition from around 1650 to 1750. However, their discussion does not imply a teleological movement of melancholy poetry. Like Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," Gray's "Elegy" has significantly shaped our contemporary (hermeneutical) expectation and perception of eighteenth-century melancholy literature. Although the poems analysed in the latter part of this chapter were written *before* the publication of Gray's renowned poem, the "Elegy" still figures as an eighteenth-century prototype as well as marking the end of the literary period in question.

The second half of this chapter focuses on the analyses of melancholy poems written by women writers around 1700. These poems relate in different ways to the framework set up between Milton and Gray by both partly resisting and partly revelling in the literary tradition of melancholy. The texts clearly show that women writers participated in the literary discourse of melancholy, and that to varying degrees their poems demand a process of remapping ideas of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry.

⁴² For a discussion of literary prototypes, see Werner Wolf, "The Lyric: Problems of Definition and a Proposal for Reconceptualisation" (2005) and the discussion below.

3.1 From Milton to Gray

The Seventeenth-Century Literary Melancholy Prototype: Milton's "Il Penseroso" and "L'Allegro" (1645)

"I know not whether the characters [i.e. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso; S.B.] are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his [Il Penseroso's] melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his [L'Allegro's] mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination", Samuel Johnson observes in his rather dismissive account on John Milton in *Lives of the English Poets*.⁴²³ Johnson's verdict caused resentment among Milton's admirers since it harshly criticised the poet's character and depreciated not only the less popular of Milton's companion poems, but also such popular works as *Lycidas*, and, most of all, *Paradise Lost*.⁴²⁴

It was not until 1740 and Georg Friedrich Händel's extended musical setting – the oratorio *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato* – that Milton's poems engendered an "Allegro-Penseroso vogue," which rapidly took hold in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴²⁵ This literary vogue that was significantly fuelled by the publication of Gray's "Elegy" in 1751,⁴²⁶ celebrated "the poetic glorification of the pleasures of melancholy with all its minor forms and varieties like contemplation, solitude and darkness, increased constantly from Gray to Keats [...]."⁴²⁷

Through his companion poems, Milton provided what Havens calls the "*Allegro-Penseroso* pattern" – a basic formula upon which numerous eighteenth-century poems of melancholy evolve, e.g. James Thomson's "Hymn on Solitude", Mark Akenside's "Hymn to Science", and William Collins's "Ode to Fear" to name but a few published before 1750.⁴²⁸ Havens refers to formal and prosodic features such as metre, use of cadences and word repetitions, as well as recurring structural devices

⁴²³ Johnson (1780-81), p. 205.

⁴²⁴ See Fairer (2001), p. 196. With *Regaining Paradise. Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (1986), Dustin Griffin provides an excellent overview of the different influences Milton had on eighteenth-century poetic writers, esp. Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Johnson, and Cowper. In the context of this study, the influence of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" on Thomson's *The Seasons* offers a useful background reading.

⁴²⁵ For a more far-reaching critical discussion of Händel's musical interpretation, see for instance, Sandra Cookson, "'Linked Sweetness': Milton, Handel, and the Companion Poems." *Milton Quarterly* 30.3 (1996): 132-142. For the "Allegro-Penseroso vogue", see Havens (1922), p. 476.

⁴²⁶ For the genesis, publication history and reception of the poem, see Lonsdale (1969).

⁴²⁷ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 236. For a detailed discussion of this icon of the lonely male poet, see Sitter (1982).

⁴²⁸ Havens (1922), p. 442. Havens provides, furthermore, an extensive, minutely, chronological list (1647-1832) of poems of both male and female writers which he considers influenced by Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (see 669-680).

such as the parallel construction of the poems and their respective openings and endings.

Though Havens provides a thorough and detailed analysis of Milton's poetry, he neglects the fact that "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" not only present a viable pattern for future literary melancholy writings, but they also represent melancholy in its entirety: the contrary, yet complimentary narrative of melancholy as a psycho-psychological pathology on the one hand, and as an intellectual and artistic distinction on the other.⁴²⁹ Milton's poems create a repertoire of literary melancholic 'symptoms' that aestheticise the melancholy experience, thus positively influencing melancholy's cultural evaluation. In other words, characteristics of melancholy that were beforehand considered pathological e.g. (obsessive) loneliness and ruminations, are transformed in "Il Penseroso" into highly valued signs of intellectual and artistic excellence (in a pseudo-Aristotelian sense) and thus into a pleasurable literary moment. The solitary self becomes a culturally relevant icon for the subjective feeling of melancholy.

Coined by Werner Wolf, the concept of poetic "prototypes" introduces the idea of distinctive aspects of the lyric text as prototypical of the genre – an idea which is also compatible both with Bell's differentiation of "discursive" (non-literary) and literary melancholy texts, and with the recognition of literary texts as melancholy (beyond explicit references). "A prototype", according to Wolf, "is characterized by a number of features that are mentally stored [by both writers as well as readers; S.B.] and are then used as standards for the identification of phenomena which are intuitively felt to be similar, but on closer inspection may turn out to correspond to these standards to various degrees only."⁴³⁰ So even if poems merely display "characteristic tendencies" instead of explicit character traits, they can still be recognised as belonging to a specific genre. These tendencies need not all be present or clearly discernible, whenever an experience or perception is linked to a prototype: although their characterizing and identifying potential increases in proportion to the quantity of their occurrence as well as to the quality of their importance and how well they are

⁴²⁹ This is a common understanding of Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," as is also shown by Baker (2011), pp. 97-101.

⁴³⁰ Wolf (2005), p. 34. The prototype draws upon the idea that basic generic traits are stored in the authors' as well as the readers' minds, e.g. through reading experience and cultural competence, and thus serves as "cognitive schemes or frames" which help to en- and decode poems correctly according to their specific generic affiliations (see 33). For the difficulties of lyrical prototypes, see Wolf (2005), p. 37f.

identifiable, there is a considerable tolerance as to their numeric configuration and the ease with which they can be discerned.⁴³¹

Wolf's concept turns out to be useful in a number of respects: Firstly, it allows for more flexibility and variations of literary texts within the limits of specific genres. Melancholic literary texts do not necessarily belong to one particular genre, which is important since not all poems that can be read as melancholic are primarily so, but instead relate to other genres as will be discussed in chapter four. Secondly, historical modifications can be taken into account and "permit [...] a gradation of the phenomenon under consideration as belonging to a category more or less, [the concept; S.B.] admits more or less typical cases, without having to exclude the less typical ones from the respective conceptual field."⁴³² And finally, if "characteristic tendencies" are a sufficient means of recognising poems as melancholic, then the literary and cultural impact of the actual prototypes can hardly be overestimated.

With regard to literary melancholy texts, Wolf's prototype-concept enables us to consider texts in which the experience of melancholy might be represented different to standardized ways, or in which melancholy is one experience amongst others. A combination of Bell's and Wolf's models seems most promising to challenge canonical ideas of literary melancholy writing and to expand the potential corpus of such writings.

Milton's companion poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" can be considered prototypical of literary melancholy writing in several respects. As mentioned above, they provide a highly influential repertoire of topical and formal figurations of melancholy, significant enough for the constitution and further development of a melancholic poetic 'subgenre' with a strong focus on the poetic-melancholic self.

Since "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are widely discussed, the following reading merely provides a cursory interpretative frame within which a few selected features of melancholy poetry will be exposed in consideration of their eighteenth-century literary melancholy successors.⁴³³ The companion poems were probably written around 1631-32 and first published in Milton's *Poems* in 1645. In terms of prosody, style, and genre, Milton scholars agree that the characteristic, intricate, and poetic composition of the respective preludes, followed by couplets and the conglomeration

⁴³¹ Wolf (2005), p. 34. Wolf reckons that in practice the characteristic tendencies have to be relevant to more than 50% of all the texts that are considered to belong to a specific genre (see 34).

⁴³² Wolf (2005), p. 34.

⁴³³ My brief reading is heavily indebted to Lobsien (1998), esp. pp. 722-733, and Hühn (1995), vol. I, pp. 190-207.

of different generic tendencies (e.g. classical hymn, academic debate, pastoral etc.), “have no close antecedents” in English literature.⁴³⁴ The complex metrical pattern of nominal octosyllabic iambic (occasionally catalectic) and trochaic couplets combined with the prelude, represent a first prototypical element of Milton’s poems and was often imitated in eighteenth-century melancholy poetry.⁴³⁵

Both poems start with a strictly parallel 10-11 lines-long prelude in which the respective speakers of the poems – the joyful “Allegro” and the melancholic, contemplative “Penseroso” – emphatically refuse the (apparently) opposite humoral-psychological temperament. After invoking their respective goddesses, Mirth and Melancholy, the speakers endow them with an invented mythological parentage, which links Mirth and Melancholy to different traditions. As an offspring of Venus and Bacchus or, alternatively, Zephyr and Aurora, Mirth as the cheerful speaker becomes associated with love and exuberance – with spring and the dawn of day. Melancholy, by contrast, is the daughter of Vesta and Saturn and thus linked to virginity and serenity, as well as contemplation and the long-passed Ovidian Golden Age – to which the pensive speaker of “Il Penseroso” is himself linked.⁴³⁶ Provided with an entourage of allegorical figures, e.g. Jollity, Laughter, Care, and Liberty or Peace on the side of Mirth and Quiet, Leisure and the “Cherub Contemplation” (“IP”, l. 54) on the side of Melancholy, the poems describe both speakers within their mindsets under the directions of their respective lodestar.⁴³⁷ Thereby, Mirth and Melancholy come to establish their traditional external and internal traits and inscribe themselves into the cultural discourse as viable strategies of subject-building.

The speaker of “L’Allegro”, for example, imagines a multitude of loosely connected scenes and sceneries, which he seems to pass in the course of a day. Time passes at different moments of the day and seasons change within Allegro’s description, together with the scenery. While he spends the spring-like morning, the summery midday and the autumnal afternoon in an imagined pastoral environment, he seeks evening pleasures within an urban, courtly environment. Finally, he hopes to immerse himself into soft music and closes the text with a reaffirming apostrophe to

⁴³⁴ Lewalski (2003), p. 5. See also the introductory head note to “L’Allegro” in Carey (2007), p. 134.

⁴³⁵ See Sickles (1932), p. 41.

⁴³⁶ See Lobsien (1998), p. 724.

⁴³⁷ All references to “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso” refer to Carey’s edition of Milton’s *Complete Shorter Poems* (1997); references to specific verses will be in brackets together with the abbreviation “LA” for “L’Allegro” and “IP” for “Il Penseroso”.

Mirth and the promise to commit himself fully to her alone: "These delights, if thou canst give, / Mirth with thee, I mean to live" ("LA", ll. 151-2.).⁴³⁸

Complementarily, after the invocation of Melancholy, this "pensive nun, devout and pure" ("IP", l. 31), and her train by the speaker of "Il Penseroso", the text presents a progression of scenes which the speaker passes through "unseen" ("IP"; l. 65), i.e. disengaged from the world and society. Describing a period of time from early evening, through the night and on to midday, he is not only (safely) enclosed by the dark of the night, but also by the ambiguous blackness of Melancholy. Although making Melancholy 'accessible' in one way, her inherent darkness remains a paradox. On the one hand, it is too overwhelming for the speaker of "Il Penseroso" to face her. Her *facies nigra*, a standard sign of the melancholic person, is described as "too bright / To hit the sense of human sight; / And therefore to our weaker view, / O'erlaid with black staid wisdom's hue" ("IP", ll. 13-16). On the other hand, it conceals and shields the poem's melancholic speaker from the view of others, so that he can "walk unseen" ("IP", l. 65) and indulge in his solitude. Both Melancholy and her protégé are unified and cloaked by darkness, disengaged from anybody or anything else.

The scenes and settings, which the pensive speaker pleurably imagines, experiences, and roams through, change from natural scenery in the earlier evening, to his withdrawal to "some high lonely tower" ("IP", l. 86) by midnight. With his retirement to the tower and its focus on contemplation and concentration on his studies of philosophy and astronomy, Penseroso conjures up the image of the early-modern melancholy scholar famously epitomised by Ficino and Burton.⁴³⁹ Isolated from society and nature, the withdrawal into the walled tower and the speaker's interiority lead to a transcending of the melancholic self which now contains all the mysteries of life and the entire universe.

In the twilight of the early morning hours, Penseroso imagines himself at a pastoral *locus amoenus* where he is not only shielded from the sun's "flaring beams" ("IP", l. 132), but also, again, hidden from the worldliness of human society: "There in close covert by some brook, / Where no profaner eye may look, / Hide me from day's garish eye" ("IP", ll. 139-141). After a short "mysterious dream" sequence ("IP", l. 147), the speaker envisions himself wandering through a cloister – a walk which leads to a fervent longing to see his self dissolved "into ecstasies, / And bring all

⁴³⁸ For a similar description, see Lobsien (1998), p. 725.

⁴³⁹ See Lobsien (1998), p 730.

heaven before mine eyes" ("IP", ll. 165-166). The poem closes with the speaker's vision of his aged self as a prophetic recluse and his final offer of commitment: "These pleasures Melancholy give, / And I with thee will choose to live" ("IP", ll. 175-176).⁴⁴⁰

Which particular elements make the poems prototypical of literary melancholy writings? Beyond the most obvious "literary-discursive" elements (in Bell' sense), e.g. Melancholy's "sad leaden downward cast" ("IP", l. 43) and the "sable stole of cypress lawn" ("IP", l. 35) that Melancholy wears around her shoulders,⁴⁴¹ the poems are interesting in terms of formal-experiential literary melancholy writing. Some aspects of formal or poetic mimesis of melancholy are realised in several structural elements (e.g. apostrophe) that have been frequently adapted since then. Imitating the melancholic's ruminations, for example, the poems exhibit circular structures on different levels of the text.

Generally, the poems complement each other and hence close various circles when read complementarily. The descriptions of Allegro's pastimes of the day are, for example, complemented by Penseroso's descriptions of the night, and thus complete the cycle.⁴⁴² The same holds true for the seasonal changes of the poems. On the structural level, the poems also represent a full circle, which can be read over and over again since the transition from the ending of "Il Penseroso" to the beginning prelude of "L'Allegro" appear to be almost seamless.

Depending on the emphasis of the reading perspective, the temperaments represented in the poems can be either read as complementary, i.e. two faces of the same (melancholic) phenomenon, or as diametrically opposed, i.e. as two different temperaments – the sanguine and the melancholic. Paradoxically, they can be read as both opposed and complementary at the same time. In the case of the latter, the poems refer to their inherent structure of *synkrisis*, that is, the comparative

⁴⁴⁰ Whereas Hühn (1995) reads "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" as poems about two different yet complementary ways of living and mindsets (rather than radically exclusive and opposite to each other) (see 197), Lobsien (1998) argues that the poems reach beyond "simple complementarity, there is rather antagonistic interaction" (724, my translation; German original: "einfache Komplementarität, sondern [es herrscht] eine spannungsreiche Interaktion"). This interaction takes place in the seemingly clear, however highly ambivalent classifications of the poems to their respective goddesses which manifest themselves esp. in Allegro's apparently carefree descriptions. Here, Lobsien discerns Allegro's actual emotional closeness to melancholy through his hunt of distraction, rather than a stable opposite to Penseroso's genuine melancholy (see 726).

⁴⁴¹ For an enumeration of melancholy imagery in Milton's poems, see Klibansky et al. (1965/1979), p. 229f.

⁴⁴² Also see Gellert Lyons (1971) and Lobsien (1998).

juxtaposition of people or things,⁴⁴³ or debate.⁴⁴⁴ The element of (endlessly) comparing and debating which of the two temperaments is the 'right' one and which will prevail is a device often utilised in literary melancholy texts, as will be shown below. In this case Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl argumentatively state that the poems themselves suggest it must be the *Penseroso* "according to the old rule governing poetic disputations that 'he who has the last word wins' [...]." ⁴⁴⁵ Finally, Milton's poems paradigmatically display the union of Hühn's subjects of the enounced and of enunciation and thus of content-related elements and structural levels. Hühn explains:

By this way of writing, the syntactical and semantic *form* as such attains meaning. The poem ["*Il Penseroso*"; S.B.] *does* what it *says*. It thus results in an analogy of the poetic statement and the medium, of the enounced and enunciation. Milton's poem becomes highly self-referential, since it thematizes its own method, and since it describes reading experiences and the effects of reading that its readers are intended to have. The self-referentiality that this kind of reflection generates is expressed as a kind of mental concentration, which further defines the concept of melancholy.⁴⁴⁶

Besides these prototypical structural elements, Hühn also alludes to the different reading dimensions of Milton's melancholy poems. Whereas "*L'Allegro*" offers an easier read, the structural complexity of "*Il Penseroso*" demands a higher degree of concentration and reflection on the part of the reader. This corresponds to the poem's level of melancholic concentration and reflection. This way, the poem "*does* what it *says*" and has a 'melancholizing' effect on the reader, forcing him/her to follow and participate in its intricate experience of melancholy.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ See "Synkrisis", *Brill's New Pauly*; <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/synkrisis-e1127330?s.num=6>; last visit 19 Aug. 2012.

⁴⁴⁴ See Lobsien (1998), p. 723, and Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 227.

⁴⁴⁵ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 229.

⁴⁴⁶ Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 205, my translation; emphasis in German original: "Durch diese Schreibweise wird die syntaktische und semantische *Form* als solche bedeutungshaltig. Das Gedicht *tut*, was es *sagt*. Es ergibt sich damit eine Analogie zwischen der Aussage und dem Medium, also zwischen Äußerungsinhalt und der Kompositionsebene. Miltons Gedicht wird in hohem Maß selbstreferentiell, da es mit dieser Struktur sein eigenes Verfahren thematisiert, und da es in sich Lektüreerlebnisse und -wirkungen [...] beschreibt, die es als Text selbst ebenfalls bei seinen Lesern intendiert. Die durch Selbstreferentialität hohe Reflektiertheit fügt sich zu dem vorgeführten Konzept von Melancholie als geistiger Konzentration."

⁴⁴⁷ In "What's it like to read *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*" (1975), Stanley Fish states another effect of reading Milton's poems. He argues that the reading experience of the poems not only emphasises the interaction between them, but also promotes an identification of the readers with one or the other temperament. While "*L'Allegro*" provides a "relaxed" reading experience, "*Il Penseroso*" proves to be "strenuous" according to Fish (86, 88). Hence, he suggests the substitution of the respective speakers with the readers *qua* reading: "In both poems, then, the speaker and the reader are to be identified, and this identification suggests a new answer to an old question: who or what are *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*? *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are the reader; that is, they stand for modes of being which the reader realizes in his response to the poems bearing their names" (95).

The last element I will address is the melancholic self (as essential part of formal-experiential literary melancholy texts) of Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", which I consider to be a prototypical one.⁴⁴⁸ Constituted through various melancholy experiences in Milton's twin poems, both speakers present themselves as disengaged from the world: they appear to be reflecting on the world as well as on themselves. As Verena Lobsien sums up: "[...] at a closer look, both speakers are on their own – even 'Allegro' is never a participant, but an observer of the social gatherings he imagines – both are highly reflective, as they observe themselves and imagine themselves imagining and, furthermore reflect upon the basis of poetic inspiration."⁴⁴⁹

After banishing melancholy in the prelude, Allegro rushes from one pleasant event and scenery to the next in order to avoid it, whereas Penseroso indulges and strives towards it as an extraordinary state of mind. Since their experiences greatly differ from one another, they constitute different melancholic selves that mirror the wide range of their underlying melancholy experiences.

Lobsien creates an analysis that goes far beyond the constitution of melancholic selves. Proposing seventeenth-century melancholy to be mainly homologous to subjectivity,⁴⁵⁰ she argues that Milton's poems constitute proto-subjective forms of poetic melancholic selves. According to Lobsien, they derive, on the one hand, from the discursive interaction between the poems to extra-literary reference points from within the tradition of melancholy, e.g. Marsilio Ficino's neoplatonic writings about the melancholy scholar in *De vita libri tres* (1489). On the other hand, they are constituted from the interaction between the poems themselves and the ways in which the poems' speakers perceive themselves and each other: "This perspectivation and the reciprocal answering on the implicit view of the other is a procedure that can be understood as a sign of a consciousness of situatedness of perceptions and hence as sign of the individuality that structures them."⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ In his article "'The Melting Voice Through Mazes Running': The Dissolution of Borders in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*" (2002), Eric C. Brown further demonstrates the permeable boundaries between the cheerful and the melancholy speakers of the poems and usefully condenses preceding scholarly approaches to this aspect of the poems.

⁴⁴⁹ Lobsien (1998), p. 733, my translation; German original: "[...] beide Sprecher [sind] genau besehen allein mit sich – auch der 'Allegro' ist ja nie Teilnehmer, sondern stets der Zuschauer der von ihm vorgestellten Geselligkeit –; beide sind hochreflektiert, insofern sie sich selbst beobachten, sich als Imaginierende imaginieren, die überdies hinaus immer wieder über die Grundlagen poetischer Kreativität nachsinnen."

⁴⁵⁰ See Lobsien (1998), p. 713.

⁴⁵¹ Lobsien (1998), p. 733; my translation; German Original: "Diese Perspektivierung und das wechselseitige Antworten auf die implizite Sichtweise des jeweils anderen ist ein Verfahren, das sich als Anzeichen eines Bewusstseins der Standortgebundenheit von Wahrnehmungen, damit als Aufweis [sic!] der sie strukturierenden Individualität lesen lässt."

This discussion clearly validates the centrality of the melancholic self as a literary category for melancholy texts. Milton's companion poems provide two opposite poles in the sphere of all possible constructions of selves through melancholy. Furthermore, the aspect of self-reflection and –observation, and the disengagement of the melancholic self from society, is an essential factor for the constitution of subjectivity and individualisation as well as the melancholy experience.⁴⁵² The prototypical elements that Milton's poems provide serve as a foundation for the further development of literary melancholy writing in the eighteenth century. Many elements – especially the melancholic self and its melancholy experience – remain nodal points in the discussion of eighteenth-century literary melancholy writings, and culminate in Thomas Gray's depiction of the lonely, male poet-speaker meditating on his own death in the famous "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard".

From Milton to Gray: Configurations of Eighteenth-Century Melancholy Poetry

"The eighteenth century, [...], inherited from the seventeenth, a decided taste for poems of melancholy, and a considerable body of poetry which satisfied that taste."⁴⁵³

Questions surrounding the influence of Milton's melancholic prototypes on eighteenth-century poetry have been the subject of ongoing debate. It has been argued that "[t]he most important and most popular representatives of the literature of melancholy such as Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-6), Blair's *Grave* (1743), and James Hervey's prose *Meditations among the Tombs* (1746), were quite uninfluenced by *Penseroso*."⁴⁵⁴ The fashionable gloomy mood prominent in eighteenth-century poetry is rather associated with pre-Romantic and sentimental tendencies foreign to "Il Penseroso."⁴⁵⁵ Although Havens asserts Milton's influence on poems written later than 1750, he nevertheless denies their influence on early eighteenth-century poetry,

⁴⁵² Emig (2006) argues a similar point when he states: "The melancholic appears to watch him- or herself mainly. Yet his or her privileged segregated state depends on a careful and often implicit observation of his or her surroundings in order to make sure that the separation is successful. It contains a continual awareness that the melancholic also feels watched, and needs to control this observation by others closely. A space is thus created for an early form of individuality through mechanisms that can be called eccentric" (61).

⁴⁵³ Reed (1924), p. 77.

⁴⁵⁴ Havens (1922), p. 472.

⁴⁵⁵ See Havens (1922), p. 472.

and particularly on the so-called 'graveyard school'.⁴⁵⁶ Alternatively, Eleanor Sickles strongly emphasises Milton's ubiquitous poetic legacy and states:

Consequently the more dismal and probably more characteristic moods of the so-called graveyard school bear little resemblance to that of 'Il Penseroso'; but its lighter moods, such as that of Gray's 'Elegy,' and the corresponding moods of much melancholy verse having nothing to do with graveyards, approach rather closely to Milton's type of melancholy. Then too, all the world borrowed from Milton, [...], and the melancholy poets were far from being exceptions; often the poems in which they express their melancholy or describe the melancholy types echo Milton's phrases or imitate the meter and structure of his poems.⁴⁵⁷

The debate demonstrates not only the critical dissent with regard to the Miltonic influence on eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, but also highlights the ambivalent reactions that the tradition of literary melancholy writings attracts. Just as melancholy as a medical phenomenon became diluted by paradigmatic shifts in the medical discourses and the increasing cultural availability of melancholy, the literary tradition analogously encompassed a multitude of poetic strands, images, and subjective manifestations of melancholy that were not necessarily compatible with one another. In order to further describe the literary framework of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, some of the most prominent strands of melancholy poetry (e.g. graveyard poetry, as well as cultural and literary influences on the literary discourse of melancholy, such as sentimentalism and sensibility), will be further examined below.

One of the most popular literary manifestations of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry was undoubtedly graveyard poetry. Despite the highly conventional and formulaic character we discern today, graveyard poems were not only immensely fashionable and well-received from the 1720s-1750s, but they also demonstrated the flare of a rather morbid and eccentric poetic subgenre. The surge of graveyard poems successfully appropriated a number of distinctive features of the nascent literary tradition of melancholy writings (and of the (pre-)enlightenment *zeitgeist*), and abated again in a more 'mainstream' mid-century elegiac mode of poetry. Yet, what makes graveyard poetry particularly melancholy and part of the literary tradition of melancholy writings? Why are poems like Parnell's "Night-Piece

⁴⁵⁶ The term 'graveyard school' is slightly misleading, since the representatives of this kind of poetry did not know each other and they did not follow a particular poetic programmatic (see Essick and Paley (1982), p. 3). As Baker (2011) phrases it: "The 'graveyard school' was in no sense an organized movement. It was a disparate grouping of separate poems by very different poets [...] who associated graveyard imagery and references with a shared chronotype (the time was evening or night, the place a graveyard)" (101).

⁴⁵⁷ Sickles (1932), p. 14.

on Death" (1721), Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742), Blair's *The Grave* (1743), and Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" (1751) part of the 'graveyard school' and at the same time canonical melancholy poems?

Besides the graveyard setting, which is an indispensable ingredient of the subgenre, the overall contemplative themes of *memento mori*, *contemptus mundi*, *ubi sunt* and 'Death as Leveller' provide a multitude of melancholy imagery and are "presented in a melancholy or elegiac tone."⁴⁵⁸ It is the highly self-reflective (male) speaker that is characteristic for graveyard and melancholy writings. Compiling the ingredients of the graveyard poetry-formula, Essick and Paley emphasise that "[t]he consciousness of the poet, or of the *persona* of the poet, is an important part of the graveyard poem: the way in which the scene strikes his sensibility is at least as important as the scene itself."⁴⁵⁹

The melancholy tone, in which the speaker reflects his thoughts of death as he "wanders through the darkness of either an outdoor night scene or an indoor church vault in order to contemplate real, concretely described graves or tombs,"⁴⁶⁰ is, I argue, the result of the melancholy mood in which the solitary poetic self experiences the graveyard scene and encounters death. Melancholy is both the originating moment as well as the verbal vehicle for the melancholy experience of the reflective and contemplating self. Moreover, characteristic of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, melancholy appears in a double and paradoxical meaning, both referring to the devastating experience of loss and at the same time, to the experience of contemplative pleasure in thoughtfulness.⁴⁶¹

And yet, the phenomenon of graveyard poetry is merely one aspect of melancholy writings during the first half of the eighteenth century. Against a matrix of political and religious influences, of literary and cultural undercurrents from the seventeenth century, and the revival of Greek-Roman literature and philosophy,⁴⁶² Reed develops

⁴⁵⁸ Essick and Paley (1982), p. 4.

⁴⁵⁹ Essick and Paley (1982), p. 4.

⁴⁶⁰ Essick and Paley (1982), p. 4.

⁴⁶¹ As Joseph Addison elaborates: "When I am in a serious Humour, I often walk by my self in Westminster Abbey: where the Gloominess of the Place, and the Use to which it is applied, with the solemnity of the Building, and the Condition of the People who lye in it, are apt to fill the Mind with a kind of Melancholy or rather Thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable" (*The Spectator*, no. 26, 30 March 1711; <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12030/12030-h/SV1/Spectator1.html#section26>; last visit 24 Dec. 2012.). Also see Essick and Paley (1982), p. 7.

⁴⁶² For a more detailed discussion of the different influences, see Reed (1924), p. 2f. Amy Reed's study *The Background of Gray's Elegy* (1924) provides a comprehensive overview of the developments of melancholy poetry from 1700-1751 and short, exemplary analyses of poems mainly written by male poets. Eleanor Sickles's complementary study *The Gloomy Egoist. Moods and Themes of Melancholy from*

three distinctive poetic types of early eighteenth-century neo-classical melancholy poetry: the Complaint of Life, the Retirement theme, and the Death theme.⁴⁶³

Despite the anti-melancholic undercurrents in the writings of Pope and Swift and the ideal of moderate melancholy recommended in contemporary periodicals,⁴⁶⁴ melancholy poetry between 1720-1750 enjoyed an increasing popularity and a genteel readership. Responsible for this were two closely intertwined literary and cultural developments: sentimentalism and sensibility.⁴⁶⁵ Their influence on the image of the disengaged male and “the lonely poet surrounded by ‘nature’”⁴⁶⁶ vastly prominent in the mid-eighteenth century can hardly be overestimated in the context of early eighteenth-century melancholy writings.

The influences of both sentimentalism (or moral sense theory) and the culture of sensibility provide the cultural, philosophical, aesthetic, and medical backdrop against which eighteenth-century melancholy poetry needs to be perceived. The beginnings of moral sense theory, especially in the writings of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, do not have as much of a direct impact on the general literature of sensibility as is commonly assumed.⁴⁶⁷ The influences of Shaftesbury’s optimistic ideas of the good and virtuous on early eighteenth-century sentimental poetry, however, were considerable.⁴⁶⁸ Besides the enthusiastic admiration of nature and the idea of benevolent man, it is the pleasant indulgence in melancholy reflection that characterises these immensely popular sentimental poems (e.g. *The Seasons* by James Thomson), and helps to validate Shaftesbury’s theory of the innate moral sense of man. Reflection is an essential part of the distinction of the good and the virtuous as explained in “An Inquiry concerning Virtue, or Merit”, which was first published in 1699 and later in his famous *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). Only through rational reflection are human beings

Gray to Keats (1932) bridges the gap from Gray to Keat’s melancholic poems of the 1830s and thus covers the (pre-)romantic developments of melancholy poetry.

⁴⁶³ Reed (1924), p. 38.

⁴⁶⁴ See Reed (1924), p. 127f.

⁴⁶⁵ Since defining sentimentalism and sensibility is an endeavour beyond the scope of this study, I will merely focus on those aspects which are arguably related to melancholy.

⁴⁶⁶ Sitter (1982), p. 9.

⁴⁶⁷ See Göbel (1992), p. 103. In his article “Der Shaftesbury-Mythos. Zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Empfindsamkeit in England”, Göbel challenges the pre-eminence of Shaftesbury and his writings in reference to the different literary genres of sensibility. Although Göbel does not deny the strong general influence of Shaftesbury’s ideal of virtue and the good, he defines Shaftesbury rather as a “catalyzer” than an “initiator” of the culture of sensibility (see 102). For another excellent account of Shaftesbury’s contribution to the culture of sensibility, see Barker-Benfield (1992), pp. 104-119.

⁴⁶⁸ For a thorough discussion of Shaftesbury’s influence on early eighteenth-century male poets, esp. James Thomson, see Cecil A. Moore’s article “Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760” *PMLA* XXXI (1916): 264-325.

able to become aware of their sentiments towards their natural and unnatural affections (e.g. desires, passions, motives), control them, and hence gain the inherently human ability to be virtuous. Shaftesbury argues that being virtuous and good serves the ultimate end of human beings. In return, virtue promotes the happiness of the virtuous person, and by extension serves to fulfil one's part in a well-ordered universe for the common good and also for one's own self.

Melancholy, however, plays an ambivalent role in Shaftesbury's thinking.⁴⁶⁹ On the one hand, he perceives it as an unnatural affection such as desires, passion etc. that promote neither public nor private good and that are "intrinsically vicious,"⁴⁷⁰ since not only do they fail to promote virtue in general, but they are incompatible with the idea of the well-ordered cosmos as such. Yet, Shaftesbury greets this kind of melancholic, who is "at war with the rest of nature" and is therefore located at the margins of society, with ongoing sympathy and compassion:

How thorough and deep must be that melancholy, which being once moved, has nothing soft and pleasing from the side of friendship, to allay or divert it? Wherever such a creature turns himself; whichever way he casts his eye, every thing around must appear ghastly and horrid; every thing hostile, and, as it were, bent against a private and single being, who is thus divided from every thing, and at defiance and war with the rest of nature.

Additionally, the victim of unnatural affections, such as melancholy, loses his or her social, moral, and intellectual potentials and suffers from a social isolation as well as incompatibility. Hence, the melancholic stands in stark contrast to the ideal member of polite society in the moral universe, as Shaftesbury continues:

It is thus, at last, that a Mind becomes a wilderness; where all is laid waste; every thing fair and goodly removed, and nothing extant beside what is savage and deformed. Now, if banishment from one's country; removal to a foreign place, or any thing which looks like solitude and desertion, be so heavy to endure; what must it be to feel this inward banishment, this real estrangement from human commerce; and to be after this manner in the desert, and in the horriddest of solitudes; even when in the midst of society? What must it be to live in this disagreement with every thing, this irreconcilableness and opposition to the order and government of the universe?

Hence it appears, that the greatest of miseries accompanies that state which is consequent to the loss of natural affection; and that to have those horrid, monstrous, and unnatural affections, is to be miserable in the highest decree.⁴⁷¹

As an unnatural affection, melancholy has nothing pleasing to offer and appears as one of the greatest evils of and for the social human being. Elsewhere, Shaftesbury

⁴⁶⁹ Melancholy is also an important factor in Shaftesbury's concept of enthusiasm. For religious melancholy and enthusiasm, see chap. 4.1, FN 752.

⁴⁷⁰ McNaughton (1996), p. 206.

⁴⁷¹ Shaftesbury (1711/1790), vol. II, p. 140f.

emphasises sociability as being pivotal to his idea of the human as a virtuous being and which if absent, will engender melancholy:

Such indeed is man's natural share of this affection that he, of all other creatures, is plainly least able to bear solitude. Nor is anything more apparent, than that there is naturally in every man such a degree of social affection, as inclines him to seek the familiarity and friendship of his fellows. It is here that he lets loose a passion, and gives reins to a desire which can hardly by any struggle or inward violence be withheld; or if it be, is sure to create a sadness, dejection and melancholy of the mind.⁴⁷²

On the other hand melancholy can, if moderate, intensify natural affection, which generally leads to public good, and can thus be virtuous:

We may observe, withal, in favor of the natural affections, that it is not only when joy and sprightliness are mixed with them, that they carry real enjoyment above that of the sensual kind. The very disturbances which belong to natural affection, though they may be thought wholly contrary to pleasure, yield still a contentment and satisfaction greater than the pleasures of indulged sense. And where a series or continued succession can be carried on, even though fears, horrors, sorrows, griefs; the emotion of the soul is still agreeable. We continue pleased even with this melancholy aspect or sense of virtue.⁴⁷³

Melancholy can promote virtue (and thus happiness), but only under certain conditions: firstly, it has to be moderate (or, better, controlled); secondly, it must serve to intensify natural affections and the reflection thereof; thirdly, it must not estrange the moderately melancholic person from society. This conception of melancholy is clearly informed by the pseudo-Aristotelian notion with regard to moderation and the power of reflection. From this condition, a sweet and sad feeling of melancholy develops which is celebrated in eighteenth-century sentimental poetry and epitomised by the lonely literary figure reflecting on nature.⁴⁷⁴

Shaftesbury's early moral sense theory provides the basis for the development of the key terms – benevolence, sympathy, and compassion – all seminal for the culture of sensibility, but this is just one of many contributions that collectively make up the bigger picture of sensibility.⁴⁷⁵ Göbel argues for an understanding of the culture of

⁴⁷² Shaftesbury (1711/1790), vol. II, p. 113.

⁴⁷³ Shaftesbury (1711/1790), vol. II, p. 87f.

⁴⁷⁴ Janet Todd (1986) observes this phenomenon also in graveyard poetry and connects it with sentimentalism when she states: "The poet, usually male, contemplates death in a darkening world, having retreated from public life into a region that provides no social and almost no physical context for the self. [...] The poetry so produced is part of the elegiac tradition of English literature, taking something in mood and convention of rural retreat stretching back to Virgil and Horace and something from Milton's 'Il Penseroso', so loved by the sentimentalists in the eighteenth century. It differs from earlier verse, however, in the assumption that its melancholy suggests a superior and valuable sensibility, which, although it leads initially to withdrawal and solitude, should result into benevolence to mankind"(51). For the eighteenth-century image of the male lonely poet, see most notably Sitter (1982).

⁴⁷⁵ For a comprehensive introduction to the literature of sensibility, see Todd (1986).

sensibility that is comprised of various “microhistories”,⁴⁷⁶ e.g. the rise of the nervous system. This physiological aspect highlights the paramount nexus of sensibility and melancholy, a conjunction which permits entry not only to early eighteenth-century medical writings, but also provides the ultimate link between the physical, nervous sensations and manifestations (weeping, blushing, swooning) with moral feelings.⁴⁷⁷ The general formula for the reciprocity of the refinement (or weakness) of the nervous system and the capability of feeling sensibility (like melancholy) is both an affliction as well as a privilege. Or, as John Mullan puts it in the context of the sentimental novel: “For, in both the novel and the ‘medical’ text, sensibility can be a special and desirable capacity, but it can also usher in the possibilities of melancholy, delirium and defeat.”⁴⁷⁸

It is this double edgedness that links melancholy to sensibility at its very core. As a prominent part of the eighteenth-century repertoire of nervous disorders and, contemporaneously, a symptom of the (over-) refined nervous system commonly associated with the female body,⁴⁷⁹ melancholy constitutes the mood in which sentimental feelings are valued. It provides the medium through which these emotions are conveyed, even if excessive melancholy also represents the socio-pathological dangers of sensibility. Like melancholy, sensibility consists of the capacity to experience pain and pleasure. Furthermore, it is through sensibility that melancholy advances to its fashionable status amongst the aspiring eighteenth-century bourgeoisie.⁴⁸⁰

Referring to the fashionable state of melancholy in the broader culture of sensibility, Clark Lawlor poignantly asks:

⁴⁷⁶ See Göbel (1996), p. 103.

⁴⁷⁷ Despite the common timing of sensibility from 1740s-1770s (see Todd (1986), p. 4), Rousseau shows in his article “Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility” (1975/2004) that the origins of sentimental writings are firmly rooted in medical writings of the development and implementation of the nervous system as the prevalent medical paradigm. Rousseau states: “[...] sensibility was not a mid- eighteenth-century phenomenon, certainly not in philosophy or the natural sciences, it was a late seventeenth century development owing its superlative paradigmatic debt to books [...] like Thomas Willis’ *Pathology of the Brain*, but also to one unprecedented, integrative work, Locke’s *Essay*” (164).

⁴⁷⁸ Mullan (1984), p. 141.

⁴⁷⁹ Also see chap. 1.3, p. 56.

⁴⁸⁰ In *Mystical Bedlam* (1981), MacDonald shows that melancholy and gentility had become “boon companions” (151) in the seventeenth century – a development which merely increased during the eighteenth century. For a comprehensive introduction of melancholy as a disorder *en vogue* within eighteenth-century polite society, see e.g. Lawlor (2011).

How on earth have humans reached the point where they can regard diseases as fashionable? Disease is a negative thing, degrading body and mind, causing pain and suffering, disrupting the normal flow of life – or sometimes entirely destroying it. Disease brings woe and misery to all nations, creeds and colours: we are left, therefore, with a central paradox: how can disease be positive, fashionable, desirable, sexy?⁴⁸¹

And yet, it is not just the question of how this can happen, but also for whom this can happen. As Lawlor concisely states: “The question of social advantage – cultural capital if you like – gained from melancholy cannot be disentangled from the discursive constitution of the social group being examined. So: religion, gender, race, class and so on all play their part in determining whether a disease can achieve fashionability within that society.”⁴⁸²

Both fashionable melancholy and sensibility are entangled in their exclusivity as well as their gendering. As demonstrated in chapter one with regard to the medical discussion of melancholy and gender, sensibility in its physiological sense was attached to the medical idea of women’s more refined nerves and hence their greater capability (and susceptibility) to the tender feelings of sensibility.⁴⁸³ As G.J. Barker-Benfield puts it: “The view that women’s nerves were normatively distinct from men’s, normatively making them creatures of greater sensibility, became a central convention of eighteenth-century literature.”⁴⁸⁴ And yet, women’s nervous system was *per se* perceived as deficient, since the delicacy and thinness of their nerves did not only predict greater sensibility, but also greater susceptibility to nervous disorders and a reduced capacity for reason.⁴⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the construction of the ‘man of feeling’ was strongly connected to the reformation of male manners, as Barker-Benfield argues. The cultivation of refinement, taste, and benevolence, which were usually associated with ‘feminine virtue’, enhanced not only the reputation and status of middle-class men,⁴⁸⁶ but also endangered their masculinity. If pushed too far, effeminacy threatened ideas of manliness and were difficult to refute.⁴⁸⁷

In poetry, the sensitive man is epitomised by the solitary, contemplative poet who consciously reflects his own woe and misery as well as that of others. John Sitter

⁴⁸¹ Lawlor (2011), p. 25.

⁴⁸² Lawlor (2011), p. 27.

⁴⁸³ For a brief discussion of gender, melancholy, and sensibility, also see Harrison (2011), pp. 11-13.

⁴⁸⁴ Barker-Benfield (1992), p. 27. In his seminal study *The Culture of Sensibility*, Barker-Benfield also overcomes the assumptions of the gendering of sensibility and demonstrates how women engaged with the ideas of sensibility, consumerism, and luxury in order to express themselves in a middle-class society.

⁴⁸⁵ See Barker-Benfield (1992), p. 26f.

⁴⁸⁶ See Barker-Benfield (1992), p. 91.

⁴⁸⁷ See Barker-Benfield (1992), p. 141.

captures this icon in his idea of “literary loneliness” which he considers characteristic of mid-eighteenth-century poetry, which is designated by “the politics of melancholy, or perhaps more accurately, the politics of sensibility, of which melancholy is simply the commonest form in poetry.”⁴⁸⁸ And yet, despite their intersection, the poetries of melancholy and sensibility are not identical. While Patricia Meyer Spacks attempts to pin down the differences to a specific “sense of depression and anger”⁴⁸⁹, I consider another aspect more decisive: Early eighteenth-century melancholy is not merely a vehicle for sensibility; it provides something more important, namely the mood or phenomenological structure through which the sentimental as well as the melancholic self experiences itself and – in the case of sensibility – the others.

The Eighteenth-Century Literary Melancholy Prototype: Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751)

At the very latest by the time of the publication of Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”, the understanding of melancholy poetry had greatly shifted towards the elegiac mode. Reed deliberately dismisses the nascent elegiac mode in her discussion of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry,⁴⁹⁰ arguing that it had not figured as prominently during the early decades of the century as after 1750.⁴⁹¹ Other critics, such as Eleanor Sickles, have emphasised, however, that the elegiac mode had already developed “as an integral part of the neo-classical attitude and practice,”⁴⁹² and established it as the most prominent form of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry.⁴⁹³ The term “elegiac mode” appears at times indistinctive, and

⁴⁸⁸ Sitter (1982), p. 85.

⁴⁸⁹ Meyer Spacks (2001), p. 267.

⁴⁹⁰ Interestingly, Reed’s (1924) explanation for dismissing the elegiac strand of melancholy poetry is based on her strong Burtonian conception of melancholy as “*tristitia sine causa manifesta*.” Hence, she argues that “remembering that Burton himself considers the death of friends among the merely adventitious causes of melancholy” (25), and hence not as a valid form of melancholy.

⁴⁹¹ See Bloomfield (1986), p. 148. In fact, Bloomfield argues that the elegiac mode “does not appear in English literature much before the 1740s,” but possibly becomes after 1750 “the predominant mode and mood of lyric poetry” (148). He considers it largely a result of the Romantic movement (see 148).

⁴⁹² Sickles (1932), p. 11.

⁴⁹³ The elegiac finds its metrical expression in the so-called elegiac stanza (i.e. a quatrain in iambic pentameters), which distinguishes Gray’s poem from other Graveyard texts (see Schor (1994), p. 41). The Augustan literary theorist Joseph Trapp explains the change of the metre as follows: “Hexameters and Pentameters were so peculiar to Elegy, that this kind of metre is so usually styled Elegiac; nor is any more soft, or more harmonious. Instead of it, we, in our own Tongue, use the Heroic” (Trapp (1712/1742), p. 169). Although James Hammond’s *Elegies* (1742/43) already used the elegiac stanza (see Lonsdale (1969), p. 108), the success of Gray’s “Elegy” provided the right momentum to settle the elegiac stanza. However, due to the popularity of this stanzaic form, I do not consider it prototypical in the context of this study.

encompasses a multitude of different poetic forms and notions. It is unified in terms of poetic mood and topics, such as (unmotivated) sadness, death and grief, the gloom and the pleasures of melancholy. Bloomfield tackles the problematic relationship of the older poetic genre of elegy and its eighteenth-century literary mode by drawing distinctions from the generic differences, as well as from the social functions they display. He defines poems of the elegiac mode as “alienated and/or sad poems which mix various moods and actions and are extremely personal”⁴⁹⁴, considering their purpose “the total expression of a personality, whereas the traditional elegy is rather an answer to a social or national need.”⁴⁹⁵

Sickles defines “elegiac mode” along the lines of Gray’s “Elegy”, emphasising descriptive elements and mood rather than ‘hard’ modal restrictions:

We shall take as our norm the mood of Gray’s “Elegy,” pensive rather than deeply mournful, penetrated with a love of quiet and solitude and philosophic musing. Its favorite themes are death and mutability. Its favorite haunts are ivied ruins and yew-shadowed churchyards. It loves twilight and silence and the notes of the sweet bird that shuns the noise of the folly. Its basis is an intellectual contemplation of the instability of life and of fame, and its emotion is vague and diffuse and on the whole not unpleasant.⁴⁹⁶

She concludes: “This sober contemplative mood [...], the mid-century seemed to agree to call melancholy, and will be convenient for us to call it elegiac.”⁴⁹⁷ Sickles’s choice of Gray’s famous text is quite typical. Not only is it often considered a watershed between the literary developments of the earlier and the later eighteenth century,⁴⁹⁸ the poem also significantly shapes our contemporary notion of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry and so serves as the poetic prototype of the century.

The “Elegy” both promotes the mode’s new characteristics and also bridges former and current melancholic literary tendencies.⁴⁹⁹ In the following, I will briefly discuss

⁴⁹⁴ Bloomfield (1986), p. 148.

⁴⁹⁵ Bloomfield (1986), p. 156.

⁴⁹⁶ Sickles (1932), p. 11.

⁴⁹⁷ Sickles (1932), p. 15f.

⁴⁹⁸ For a detailed discussion of Gray’s “Elegy” as a watershed, see e.g. Henry Weinfield’s “Introduction” in *The Poet Without a Name: Gray’s Elegy and the Problem of History* (1991).

⁴⁹⁹ What Sickles (1932) circumscribes as a contemporary “inflationary usage of the term ‘elegy’” (10) and Bloomfield (1986) as a matter of wider application of the term (see 156), is actually bound to a broader cultural development as Schor demonstrates in her study *Bearing the Dead* (1994). The transformation from “an objective form” elegy to a “subjective” elegiac mode “is subtended by a larger cultural transformation in the construction of the private and public morality. The ‘elegy’ becomes ‘elegiac’ precisely when the public moral significance of individual mourning becomes widely recognized” (21). Contemporaneous to this development, the gendering of mourning shifts from a traditionally feminine provenance towards “the masculine gendering of mourning [...] [which] accompanies a strengthening conviction in the public significance of mourning” (19). This shift, however, also results in the higher cultural valorisation of the male elegiac mode, whereas the elegy,

Gray's poem as a melancholic-elegiac text highlighting a selection of 'old' and 'new' prototypical characteristics pivotal to the discussion of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry.

The "Elegy" blends numerous literary currents that overlap with melancholy poetry of the early eighteenth century: the core characteristics of sensibility (sympathy, compassion, benevolence); traits of the graveyard poetry; and the elegiac mode, to name but the most obvious.⁵⁰⁰ Reed aptly describes the furore created by Gray's "Elegy", which "[...] came before its public not as a presentation of novel thought but as the perfectly adequate expression of a widespread popular feeling, the 'melancholy' of the first half of the eighteenth century."⁵⁰¹

Gray's complex poem is best described in several parts:⁵⁰² In the first three stanzas, a male poet-speaker establishes time and setting of the poem (ll. 1-12). In the twilight of the parting day while wandering through a graveyard, the speaker begins to contemplate the lives of "The rude forefathers of the hamlet" (l. 16) buried in the churchyard. After imagining the daily life of the humble villagers (ll. 17-28), the stanzas 8-11 elaborate on the motive of 'Death as Leveler,'⁵⁰³ arguing that whether rich or poor, everybody's path "lead but to the grave" (l. 36). The dichotomy of rich and poor (or, the simple and the great) is further continued in lines 45-76. Here, the speaker laments the villagers' deprivation of the chance of greatness. He thus wonders if "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest, / Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood" (l. 59-60). Yet, he also admires the dead villagers' imagined simplicity:

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way. (ll. 73-76)

Stanzas 20-23 describe the villagers' tombs resembling their rustic and illiterate lives as epitomised by the gravestones' engravings "spelt by th' unlettered muse" (l. 81).

as the poetically 'lower' form remains associated (and relegated) to the feminine realm of writing as will be further discussed in chap. 4.1.

⁵⁰⁰ The "Elegy" is by no means the only melancholy poem by Gray that deals with melancholy. Some of his best-known poems like "An Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" and "Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West" are strongly informed by this phenomenon. The death of Gray's school friend Richard West is said to have not just inspired the sonnet just mentioned, but also the "Elegy". For a detailed discussion of the long debate over the origins of Gray's "Elegy", see Lonsdale (1969), pp. 103-110.

⁵⁰¹ Reed (1924), p. 1f.

⁵⁰² The following description is indebted to Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 241ff.

⁵⁰³ For the popular image of death making everybody and everything equal, see for instance, James Shirley's (1596-1666) poem "Death the Leveller" as well as Shakespeare's elegy "Fear no more" (in *Cymbeline*, IV.2, ll. 259-282).

With line 93 the strategy of the poem radically shifts as the male poet-speaker begins to address himself and to anticipate the other's response to his own death. The speaker's musings upon this response are rendered by a "hoary-headed swain" (l. 97), who tells an unknown stranger ("some kindred spirit", l. 96) about the deceased young poet. The underlying and urgent desire to be remembered is palpable throughout the last part of the poem, but especially in the last three stanzas. They clearly balance the first three stanzas, in which the male speaker successfully fashions himself as the poet in the graveyard, in that the speaker imagines his own epitaph and basically re-enacts the image of the now dead poet buried in the graveyard.

This prompts speculation concerning Gray's own experiences of melancholy and his attitude towards it: In his letters, Gray demonstrated more than once that he was quite familiar with the different forms of melancholy. In a letter (no. 110) to his close friend Richard West May 27th, 1742, he famously differentiates between 'white' and 'black' melancholy:

Mine, you are to know, is a white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy for the most part; which though it seldom *laughs* or dances, nor even amounts to what one calls Joy or Pleasure, yet is a good easy sort of a state. [...] The only fault of it is insipidity; which is apt now and then to give a sort of Ennui. [...] But there is another sort, black indeed, which I have now and then felt, that has somewhat in it like Tertullian's rule of faith, *Credo quia impossibile est*; for it believes, nay, is sure of every thing that is unlikely, so it be but frightful; and, on the other hand, excludes and shuts its eyes to the most possible hopes, and every thing that is pleasurable; from this the Lord delivers us! for none but he and sunshiny weather can do it.³⁰⁴

Gray clearly declares himself a sufferer of 'white' as well as 'black' melancholy, however not without a witty undertone. The fact that only God and "sunshiny weather" can free the melancholic from his despair alludes to both melancholy's potential severity as well as its ordinary nature which will be cured with a bit of sunshine. Gray's "Elegy", however, does not echo his critical notion of melancholy, but uses melancholy as a serious and contemplative mood and mode to mediate upon the big questions of life, death, and the self.

³⁰⁴ Gray (1971), p. 209. Also see Snyder (1979), p. 129. In his article "The Epistolary Melancholy of Thomas Gray" (1979), Robert Lance Snyder reflects upon "the brooding introspection" (125) which he designates as characteristic for Gray's poetry as well as letter writing. For Snyder, Gray's melancholy is more than a subjective feeling, he argues: "My thesis is simply that if [Gray] did experience the culture of his time as being fragmented and self-negating, a view which his letters persuade us to adopt, then his melancholic absorption with himself is implicitly a criticism of his age" (126). Snyder reads Gray's letters and life as a constant balancing between the poet's scholarly reclusiveness and his desire for social and emotional expansion as is typically representative of his age. Snyder diagnoses Gray's ambivalence towards his status as a poet as the major reason for Gray's permanent melancholy and "unrelenting self-analysis" (135). For another discussion of Gray suffering from depression and melancholy, also see Harrison (2011), pp. 40-52.

Besides the underlying melancholy mood through which it structures the speaker's perceptions as well as his meditation,⁵⁰⁵ the first and last three stanzas of the poem relate most clearly to the literary tradition of melancholy. At first glance, the first three stanzas clearly relate to Milton's "Il Penseroso" and graveyard poetry. Although Lonsdale's copious annotations of Gray's poem demonstrate that Milton's proto-melancholic poem is only one of numerous sources of the "Elegy",⁵⁰⁶ its prevailing mood and some key words like "curfew" (l. 1) trace back to "Il Penseroso". Apart from these intertextual allusions, it is the figure of the lonely male poet that clearly connects Gray's text to Milton's "Penseroso".⁵⁰⁷ At the same time, the lonely poet in the graveyard also refers to one of the generic key conventions of graveyard poetry in addition to the thematic allusions such as the meditation on mortality, loneliness, and death. The melancholic setting, time, and atmosphere through which the lonely figure strives are created by a combination of several melancholic common places such as the twilight of the "parting day" (l. 1), the fading "glimmering landscape" (l. 5), the Miltonic "ivy-mantled tow'r" (l. 9), the "moping owl" that "to the moon complain[s]" (l. 10) to name but a few.

Disengaged from society and clearly marked by his melancholic experience of death and mortality, the melancholic speaker of the poem makes a strong appearance in line four and disappears in the darkness he identifies with: "The ploughman homewards plods his weary way / And leaves the world to darkness and to me" (l. 3-4). Stressed by position, metre, and rhyme, the speaker makes a prominent appearance, and steps back behind his meditations on and imaginings of the villagers and their simple lives (l. 5-92).⁵⁰⁸ The speaker's performed social disengagement and marginality as well as his radical detachment, express themselves in his strong defiance to relate to any social class – he appears to be free from social ties and without any relations to any of the social classes he alludes to throughout the poem, and therefore epitomises the prototypical Romantic poet-outsider.⁵⁰⁹ The first person pronoun, that only reappears in l. 92, palpably renders the structural withdrawal of the persona into its own reflections. Musing on the lives of

⁵⁰⁵ Hühn (1995, vol. I) exemplifies this prevailing melancholic mood in the numerous pathetic fallacies of the poem (see 245).

⁵⁰⁶ E.g. Blair's *The Grave*, Akenside's *Epistle to Curio* and *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), and Thomas Wharton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747). For an exhaustive list of sources for the beginning stanzas, see Lonsdale (1969), pp. 117-120.

⁵⁰⁷ See for instance, Sacks (1985), p. 133f.

⁵⁰⁸ Hühn (1995) makes a similar point, see vol. I, p. 242.

⁵⁰⁹ See Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 241f.

the villagers at first, the focus of the reflections radically shifts in l. 93, where the speaker commences to anticipate and imagine his own death (as a poet). Under the spell of melancholy the speaker both experiences the temporality of his own existence and the risk of being forgotten, which results in the sorrow of immersion into nothingness and melancholy as the only feature of his achievements.⁵¹⁰

The radical shift from an interior to an exterior perspective of the poet-speaker, i.e. from the speaker's internal reflections on the villagers to his externalised reflections on himself as the socially estranged poet, correlates with the change in the communicative situation of line 93. From here onwards, the speaker observes his melancholic self from the outside and through the consciousness of the "hoary-headed swain,"⁵¹¹ whose descriptions consolidate the speaker's careful construction of his poetic self in highly melancholic terms: "'Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn, / 'Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love'" (ll. 107-108).

The imagined narrative of the swain culminates in the epitaph of the young poet's grave at the end of the poem:

*Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.* (117-120, italics in the original)

Here, the prevalent notion of melancholy is closely tied to "Fair Science" and marks the melancholic as (natural) scholar in the pseudo-Aristotelian sense, i.e. naturally introspective, contemplative, and scholarly. At the same time, Lonsdale highlights the undertones of sensibility in the epitaph and reads melancholy in a specifically eighteenth-century interpretation:

The meaning of [melancholy] is crucial to the 'Epitaph'. G[ray] does not mean simply that the poet has been made melancholy (=gloomy) because his education made him aware of abilities which he has been unable to fulfil [...]. The favourable sense of 'melancholy', implying a valuable kind of sensibility, [...], was becoming fashionable at this time. The heightened sensibility of the melancholy man ideally expresses itself in benevolence and other social virtues, rather than merely in solitary wandering, although that usually precedes it.⁵¹²

Notwithstanding all literary allusions to Milton's "Il Penseroso" (and other poetic melancholy texts), Gray's "Elegy" offers the strong undertone of sensibility designated by the generally positive connotation of a moderate melancholy. This implies a (fashionably) pensive, contemplative, and introspective mood in which the

⁵¹⁰ Interestingly, critics, e.g. Hühn (1995) and Backscheider (2008), judge the new tone in the last part of the poem as self-pity and evaluate it from very different points of view.

⁵¹¹ See Hühn (1995), p. 243.

⁵¹² Lonsdale (1969), p. 139.

melancholic man reflects and hence performs social virtues (according to the writings of moral sense philosophers like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith), as a prototypical feature of eighteenth-century melancholy texts.

Moreover, the self-performance and -observation of the melancholic poetic self finds its climax in the epitaph. Here, the epitaph becomes a self-elegy in itself, one that immortalises both the poem as well as its poetic melancholic self enshrined within the text.⁵¹³ The highly self-conscious performance of a melancholic self as a poet, the radical social disengagement and constant self-reflection accompanied by an increasing emotionalisation of this self,⁵¹⁴ are further prototypical features. The poem's blend of sentimental undertones, such as "*He gave to Misery all he had, a tear*" (l. 123; italics in the original), and radically subjective moments (e.g. self-performance as a poet) in an elegiac-melancholic mode, would turn out highly influential for melancholy poetry of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and has shaped our perception and expectation of melancholy poetry to this day. This prompts the question of how we assess poems of melancholy that defy these prototypes and hence challenge our hermeneutic expectations of melancholy poetry.

3.2 Resisting and Revelling: Female Figurations of the poetic-melancholic Tradition

The vogue of sentimental writings in the latter half of the eighteenth century was "an especially suitable medium for marginal women [poets; S.B.]," who "could express themselves with perfect propriety in its conventional diction and could exalt their own sensibility without appearing improperly self-centred."⁵¹⁵ While it is correct that women writers became more prominent during the second half of the eighteenth century, it remains questionable if the literary tradition of melancholy really offered a viable vehicle for women poets. Against Milton's immense literary influence on melancholy poetry, women writers do not seem to have contributed to this specific literary tradition. Critics therefore tend to preclude women's participation in melancholy poetry previous to 1750. As Backscheider puts it:

⁵¹³ See Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 247. For the subgenre of self-elegy, see below chap. 4.2, p. 230.

⁵¹⁴ See Hühn (1995), vol. I, p. 243f.

⁵¹⁵ Todd (1986), p. 40 and 60.

[W]omen [do not] court melancholy, as it is generally agreed many male poets of the time do. It was the mood of poetic sensibility and inspiration, and although it often led to religious reflection on mutability and mortality, there was often an element of [...] 'a hedonistic delight in the pleasures of pathos and sadness.' In [...] most of the women's poems, melancholy steals upon the poet or is a spontaneous response to a scene, time of day, or experience. It is not courted, and it is definitely not hedonistic or self-indulgent. There may be a sense of the luxury of solitude and time to explore the feelings and associations, but the kind of self-pity some readers find in, for instance, the conclusion of *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard* is absent.⁵¹⁶

This approach fails to consider the diversity of eighteenth-century expressions of different kinds of "melancholies". The following analyses of poems by early eighteenth-century women writers aim at differentiating this notion of melancholy poetry, thereby opening up a wider spectrum of melancholy writing that exemplifies the diversity of the literary phenomenon, as well as the diverse forms of poetic-melancholic selves. The chosen works will span between indulging (or "revelling", as I suggest) in melancholy, and the act of resisting melancholy as a cultural and literary lure. The following analyses will show how the selected poems oscillate between these poles to varying effect.

By resisting, I refer to poetic strategies in which the persona appears to consciously "strive against, fight or act in opposition to" melancholy.⁵¹⁷ The persona withstands and explicitly negates melancholy in the poem. And yet: despite the resistance against it, the speaker nevertheless negotiates melancholy and simultaneously stresses its presence and power.⁵¹⁸ By revelling in melancholy, I refer to the following meaning: "[t]o take intense delight or satisfaction in [...]; to gain great pleasure from" melancholy.⁵¹⁹ I prefer "to revel [in; S.B.]" over "to indulge", due to the word's specific ambivalence. Since the 'pleasures' of melancholy are not without ambivalent moments, their critical terminology should not be either. Although "to indulge" expresses this ambivalence in its morally objectionable meaning of "to over-indulge", "to revel [in]" presents this ambivalence on another eighteenth-century specific medical connotation of the word that is now obsolete, namely to "carry out

⁵¹⁶ Backscheider (2008), p. 242.

⁵¹⁷ "resist, v.", OED online, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/163658?rskey=9mcaFB&result=2#eid>; last visit 14 Sept. 2012.

⁵¹⁸ Bergemann et al. (2011) define "negation" as a "[t]ransformational process of active and explicit exclusion. The object is refused, but remains present through the negative reference or gets construed through the exclusion respectively" (52); my translation; German original: "Transformatorisches Verfahren der aktiven und expliziten Ausgrenzung. Das Objekt wird zurückgewiesen, bleibt aber gerade in der negativen Bezugnahme stets präsent bzw. wird dadurch erst konstruiert."

⁵¹⁹ "revel, v.1", OED online, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164690?rskey=BDOP7k&result=3#eid>; last visit 14 Sept. 2012.

revulsion" or to "revulse".⁵²⁰ In this meaning, the verb explicitly connoted the evacuating of the surplus of the humours. As discussed in chapter one, the pathological forms of melancholy and its nervous offspring were closely associated with women, which makes "to revel" even more apt for the following analyses and emphasises its inherent ambivalence in both enjoying melancholy, and being at risk of falling prey to it.

What unites the poems discussed in this chapter is that their reference to melancholy is explicit – albeit to varying degrees. They ostensibly grapple with melancholy in terms of 'literary-discursive' elements (in Bell's sense), as well as with formal and experiential aspects. They resist or revel in it, and sometimes both at the same time. Crucially, all these poems present us with an on-going literary negotiation of the melancholy experience, which turns them into a representative, if diverse, selection of early figurations of feminine poetic-melancholic selves.

"In soft Complaints no longer ease I find": Anne Wharton's "To Melpomene Against Complaint" (1693)

Anne Wharton's (1659-1683)⁵²¹ recognition as a poet is strongly connected to her maternal uncle, the famous courtier and Restoration poet Henry Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Her elegy upon his death in 1680, "Elegie on John Earle of Rochester", was the only one of her poems printed during her lifetime and prompted her literary recognition by contemporary wits and writers like Aphra Behn, Edmund Waller, and John Grubham Howe. During this time, Wharton suffered from recurring illnesses such as sore throats, virulent inflammation of her eyes as well as convulsive fits – ailments from which she had suffered since her early youth – and was treated by the most eminent physicians of her time, including Dr Thomas Willis and Dr Richard Lower.⁵²² A longer stay and treatment in Paris and Montpellier in 1681 did not prove successful, and Wharton's letters to her husband, the politician Thomas Wharton (1648-1715)⁵²³, whom she had married in 1673, demonstrate her increasing despair and sadness upon her illness when she writes on July 2nd, "for I am not yet meloncoly

⁵²⁰ "† revel, v.2", *OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164691?rskey=BDOP7k&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid>; last visit 14 Sept. 2012.

⁵²¹ All information about Anne Wharton's life is drawn from the very detailed biographical account provided by Germaine Greer and Susan Hastings in *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton* (1997).

⁵²² For Willis's treatise of melancholy, see chap. 1.2, p. 42. For Dr Lower, see also Finch's "Spleen" (ll. 142-150) below in the Appendix, p. 275.

⁵²³ See Clark, "Wharton, Thomas, first marquess of Wharton, first marquess of Malmesbury, and first marquess of Catherlough (1648–1715)", *DNB online*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29175?docPos=428>; last visit 3 Aug. 2012.

enough to beleieve you would be pleased with my eternale sicknes, much les with the death of / Your obedient humble seruant / Anne Wharton.”⁵²⁴

After a year of remission in 1683, her condition worsened and she died later that year, leaving almost her entire fortune to her husband.⁵²⁵ Although the match was at first considered favourable for both families, the marriage was regarded as unhappy and hampered by several adversities: by the continued negotiations over Anne Wharton’s unpaid dowry; by her husband’s political, social, and moral misconduct; and by rumours of adultery, separation, and neglect.⁵²⁶

Probably written before 1680 and first published in 1693, the poem “*To Melpomene Against Complaint*” was one of a few poems by Wharton published in the years following her death.⁵²⁷ At first sight, the title of the poem predicts a rather traditional poetic invocation of Melpomene, the muse of tragedy and thus implicitly of melancholy. However, in the course of the poem, this invocation becomes inverted and turns into a matter of grief and lament, and ultimately of poetic inspiration.

Symptomatically, the 33-verse long poem does not begin with the conventional address of the muse herself. Rather, the female speaker begins with a bold, self-conscious statement, in which she turns against a poetically established and flourishing genre of early modern literature suggested by the poem’s title: “In soft Complaints no longer ease I find” (l. 1). This is both an ironic and ambivalent statement, since the poem clearly participates in exactly the literary tradition it seeks to reject. It fully satisfies the generic convention of an individual speaker lamenting his or her grief and therefore demonstrates in general the complaint’s close kinship to the lament and the elegy. And yet the speaker clearly dismisses the complaint as the “latest refuge of a Tortur’d Mind” (l. 2), and as insufficient to express the extent of her personal sorrows. Moreover, not only does the female speaker dismiss the

⁵²⁴ Qtd. in Greer and Hastings (1997), p. 73.

⁵²⁵ Despite the inherent pitfalls of retrospective diagnoses, Greer and Hastings (1997) suggest in their account that, although Wharton herself and attendants might have believed her to suffer from hysteria or greensickness, it might have been syphilis, then “practically an occupational disease of courtiers,” (100) or another venereal disease which she attracted at court or through her husband.

⁵²⁶ For example, Goodwin Wharton (Thomas’s brother), spread the rumour that Anne “had lain a long while by her uncle Rochester” (Greer and Hastings (1997), p. 64). This idea which formed a substantial part of earlier biographical accounts of Anne Wharton.

⁵²⁷ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 280. Acc. to Germaine Greer, a critical edition of newly discovered poems written by Anne Wharton is to be expected in the coming years (telephone conversation with the author of this study on April 13th, 2011).

complaint because of its generic-expressive restrictions,⁵²⁸ but also identifies it as a tradition with male connotations and debases it to the realm of: “Fancy” of “Romantick Heros” (l. 3) who tell “their Griefs to senceless Trees” (l. 4). With “Romantick Heros” the speaker refers to and challenges the Ovidian myth of Orpheus, and thus one of the founding myths of the male poet.

After Orpheus had lost Eurydice for the second time to the underworld, he not only renounced his love, but also started to recite his mournful songs to trees.⁵²⁹ As Ovid recounts in Book 10 of his *Metamorphoses*: “When the poet born of the gods sat down there / And touched the resonant strings of his lyre, / Shade came to the place. Not a tree stayed away [...].”⁵³⁰ The assembly of the “senceless Trees” (“To Melpomene”, l. 4) is of special interest in this case. Ovid provides a long list of trees, including not only “The high-crested chestnut, soft lindens and beech, / The virgin laurel, the brittle hazel, the tough ash”,⁵³¹ but also and foremost “the cone-shaped cypress, / Now a tree, but once a boy beloved by that god / who tensions both the bow and lyre with strings.”⁵³² The allusion to “Cyparissus and the Stag,” which recounts the transformation of a boy into a cypress – still an emblem of graveyards, melancholy, and mourning –, is obvious. After Cyparissus accidentally kills the beloved stag, he falls into deep, excessive grief and melancholy:

What did Phoebus / Not say to comfort him, admonishing him to grieve / Moderately and in proportion to the event? / The boy only groaned and begged as the gods’ last gift / That he mourn for all time. And now, as his life / Ebbed away in endless weeping, his limbs began / To grow green, and his hair, which just now had hung / Over his snow-white brow, became a bristling crest, / And he stiffened into a tree with a slender top / That looks up to heaven’s stars. The god groaned, / ‘You shall be mourned by me, you shall be mourned by me, you shall mourn others, / And you shall always be there where others grieve.’⁵³³

In Wharton’s poem, the strong and pejoratively used allusion to the myth of the mourning Orpheus (and implicitly also that of Cyparissus), turns the speaker’s

⁵²⁸ How the complaint develops into a contemporary “paradigm of public female discourse” (238) is a subject of the article “The Female Complaint” (1988) by Lauren Berlant. Here, Berlant argues for the female complaint to be considered “a mode of self-expression, [...] an admission and a recognition both of privilege and powerlessness: it is a powerful record of patriarchal oppression circumscribed by a knowledge of woman’s inevitable delegitimation within the patriarchal public sphere. The *a priori* marking of a female discourse as *less serious* is paradoxically the only condition under which the complaint mode can operate as an effective political tool” (243).

⁵²⁹ Another reading could refer to the tradition of pinning love poems to trees, see for instance, Orlando in Shakespeare’s *As you like it*.

⁵³⁰ Ovid (2010), Book 10, ll. 92-94.

⁵³¹ Ovid (2010), Book 10, ll. 96-97.

⁵³² Ovid (2010), Book 10, ll. 111-112.

⁵³³ Ovid (2010), Book 10, ll. 137-148. The cypress, or more precisely a crown or a wreath of cypresses, also ties Melpomene – the poem’s muse – into this tapestry of melancholy and poetry, as it belongs to her emblems.

dismissal of the complaint into a conscious denial of an entire male tradition of poetry and with it, the prototypical divine, male, and melancholic poet. Contrary to Orpheus, the poet-speaker of the poem finds “no Pleasure” to recount “a doleful Tale in Melancholy Verse” (ll. 5-6), and with this remark severs the ties between the male melancholy literary tradition and her own poem.

In spite of this, she tells the “doleful Tale” of the cold-heartedness of the world and of humankind “in Melancholy Verse”. Cast in closed heroic couplets, the speaker leaves her individual state of emotions in order to analyse the bigger picture of a generalised, emotionally crippled state of the world she is surrounded by. In the following verses, the poem appears to be a conventional complaint of life, in which the speaker (not without a satirical undertone) laments the relentlessness and pitilessness of human nature: “Men are more Deaf than Trees, more Wild than Seas: / Complaints and Tears will sooner Storms appease, / Than draw soft Pity from an Human Breast” (ll. 7-9). Cruel and cold humankind is pictured as beyond the natural world and ‘natural’ feeling, like compassion and human sorrow – expressed through futile “Complaints and Tears” – and is lost on an unnatural, emotionally severed human society. In a stark dichotomy between “the Happy” and “the Opprest” (l. 10), the poem continues to describe the wide moral gap between the supposedly “Happy”, who are depicted as hard-hearted, sinfully proud and self-righteous, and the “Opprest”, who appear as an empty foil against which the moral decay of the happy few can be painted.

The persona herself serves as a mere observer who does not relate to either group. She seems above this dichotomy and reverses the objects of debate, namely the clash between cold happiness and affective submissiveness, illuminating them from either side, but still without any reconciliation. On the one hand, she questions the “Joy” that pity and compassion (l. 20) can bring, although she just called for the very sentiments and virtues in the previous verses, and finds that pity “affords me no relief” (l. 21). On the other hand, she reverses and denies the soothing and consoling effect of pity on the “Opprest”, stating: “To see another’s Eyes with pity melt, / For wretched me, would add to what I felt” (ll. 22-23). Hence, compassion and pity, the sentimental virtues the speaker has admonished as missing in the “Happy”, do not have any effect – neither on the active emotional agent, nor on the passive recipient. These feelings, according to the speaker’s rationale, rather enhance the grief instead of offering relief. Narrowing the poetic discussion down to her personal feelings, the

speaker still refuses to identify with either group, but implies that her emotional state is beyond the dichotomy of “Happy” and “Opprest”.

Emphasising her self-conscious statement at the beginning of the poem in a slightly modified way (see l. 24), the speaker reconfirms that the degree of her grief and sorrows – “For such an Heart as mine in sorrow drown’d” (l. 25) – exceeds the limits of expression available to a poetic form of complaint. Finally, the long awaited invocation of the muse Melpomene takes place, although in an inverted way. “Sleep, sleep, *Melpomene*, thou mournful Muse” (l. 26), the female speaker – emphasised by the double alliteration within this verse – begs her muse, whom she holds responsible for her impenetrable mental grief (see l. 27).

With Melpomene, the speaker addresses the Muse of Tragedy. She was initially considered the Muse of Singing or thought to be a songstress, hence her telling name (Μελπομένη; “she who sings”). As the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne, Melpomene embodies one of the nine muses and is often represented with a club or a knife, and the mask of tragedy. She is also often seen wearing a crown or wreath of cypress leaves, which strongly associates and often identifies her with melancholy.⁵³⁴ Since Horace’s Odes, Melpomene was recognised as the most sublime of the nine *músai* and is said to inspire her devotees to grand death laments and beautiful lyrical phrases.⁵³⁵

Confidently, almost boldly, the speaker reinforces (“I’ll say”) her charges against the muse, accusing her of keeping her sorrows awake “with thy Charms, / And drives soft slumbers from my Longing Arms” (ll. 28-29). The continuous s-alliteration of “Sleep, Sleep” (l. 26), “soft slumbers” (l. 29) and anaphoric “Sleep, sleep” (l. 30) combined with the simultaneously occurring m-alliteration in “*Melpomene*, [...] mournful Muse” (26) and, slightly differently repeated, “my Muse” (l. 30) – the alliterative rhyme with “melancholy” is clearly coincidental but still suggestive –

⁵³⁴ Melpomene belonged to an established repertoire for the poetry of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In his *Shepherd’s Calendar* (1579), Spenser calls her “thou mournfulst Muse of nyne” in the “November”-eclogue, also see Kennedy (2007), p. 18. In the eighteenth century, the poet John Gilbert Cooper clearly identifies her as melancholy in a typically graveyard style in his three-part “The Estimate of Life” (1746): “MELPOMENE. / Offspring of Folly and of Noise, / Fantastick Train of airy Joys, / Cease, cease your vain delusive Lore, / And tempt my serious Thoughts no more, / Ye horrid Forms, ye gloomy Throng, / Who hear the Bird of Midnight’s Song; / Thou too, Despair, pale Spectre, come, / From the Self-murd’rer’s haunted Tomb, / While sad MELPOMENE relates, / How we’re afflicted by the Fates “ (I, l. 1-11). The influential eighteenth-century bookseller and writer Robert Dodsley dedicates an Ode to “Melpomene, or the Regions of Terror and Pity” (1757), in which he pleads with her for poetic inspiration as well as shelter from his inner terror and despair.

⁵³⁵ See “Melpomene”, *Brill’s New Pauly*, <http://www.paulyonline.brill.nl/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/melpomene-e731250?s.num=0&s.q=Melpomene>; last visit 22 Sept. 2011.

imitates the effect of lulling Melpomene to sleep and is a moment in which the poem does exactly what it says.

The advent of Melpomene marks a clear shift in the poem. The addressee shifts from an undefined audience to the speaker's Muse, thus creating a more intimate but poetically traditional communicative situation. With the address now directed to the muse, the subjective and emotional set-up of the speaker becomes the focal point for the remainder of the poem, which also increases the 'melancholizing' effect on the reader.

In the final part of the poem, there is an increased use of tropes and figures, especially alliteration, which accentuates the presence of the muse. The stanzaic form of the final four verses undergo a subtle change: Although still iambic pentameter, the heroic or closed couplet structure changes in a quatrain emphasised in the alternate rhyme scheme, and anticipates in parts the elegiac stanza of the eighteenth century. The shift from the couplet structure towards the quatrain also demonstrates that the speaker's emotions cannot be expressed in couplets, not even open couplets, but needs the wider stanzaic space.

Finally, the persona, now also clearly marked as the poet, is much more present in this part of the text and presents herself as sorrowful, but also self-consciously bold and demanding. "Sleep, sleep, my Muse, and let my Cares alone," she pleads with Melpomene, and adds slyly, "But if thou wilt not, since thy Harp is strung; / Attend a while, and, like a dying swan, / My latest Accents shall be sweetly sung" (ll. 30-33). The poet-speaker's determined demand of her muse to inspire her (if Melpomene keeps aggravating her sorrows), speaks again for the persona's self-consciousness, which is already manifest at the beginning of the poem when the speaker refutes the entire (male) literary tradition, despite simultaneously participating in it. The linking of the poem to the allegedly beautiful, but mournful song of a dying swan – according to the literary *topos* swans are mute and start to sing only just before they die – bestows upon the speaker a certain degree of modesty, and, in combination with the previous demand made of her muse, also boldness. Yet the poem ends on a sweetly sad tone of melancholy, alluding to her aspired death as well as addressing her self both poetically and melancholically.

The poem's generally melancholic character can be mainly construed by its invocation of Melpomene, as well as its sad and lamenting tone. The poem alludes to melancholic *topoi* and negotiates the melancholy experience. The formal-mimetic melancholy aspects are mainly realised in the speaker's on-going discussion about

the complaint as a meaningful and appropriate genre for her woe. Despite the satiric and bold statements, the speaker repeatedly returns to her lament, which, as she tries to convince her readers, is inexpressible in such conventional (male) genres as the complaint and its associations with melancholy. Since she is, however, participating in the very genre after all, the on-going ambivalence makes it difficult to locate the speaker's distinctive position. Although she seems to resist the complaint and its conventional repertoire of melancholy imagery, she appropriates and revels in the genre in order to air her specific laments.

This becomes obvious, for instance, through the inverted invocation of Melpomene, who embodies the strongest and most visible link to melancholy in the poem. In one way, the speaker invokes the muse and in another dismisses her or lulls her to sleep, since she holds Melpomene responsible for both the constant reminding of her own immeasurable melancholy, grief and for inspiration. Hence the experience of grief and melancholy is closely linked to the experience of poetic inspiration. Both are epitomised by Melpomene and the ambivalent stance of the persona towards her muse. The invocation of mournful Melpomene designates the speaker as a melancholic, pensive, and sorrowful poetic self. The innate ambivalence and tension towards Melpomene is amplified by the double structure of the invocation; and by the oscillation between a general complaint levelled at the world and sympathy with its sensitive and sentient beings. It also reveals how alien the poetic-melancholic self feels in the pre-set forms of literary melancholy writings, and her struggle with the aesthetic expression of a "Heart as mine in sorrow drown'd" (l. 25).

"[M]y old inveterate foe": Anne Finch, Lady Winchilsea's "Ardelia to Melancholy" (comp. 1690-91)

If Wharton's poem features an ambivalent poetic-melancholic self, the poem "Ardelia to Melancholy" by Anne Finch presents a diametrically opposed literary expression of the experience of melancholy as both a cultural and pathological phenomenon.

Anne Finch (1661-1720), Countess of Winchilsea, is one of the best-known women poets around 1700, whose fame was inextricably connected with her melancholic

writings.⁵³⁶ She started her career as a writer during her service as a maid of honour to Mary of Modena, wife of the Duke of York, the later King James II,⁵³⁷ and pursued this path after her resignation from court and during her forced political and social retirement after the Glorious Revolution.⁵³⁸ At first circulating her poems in manuscript form, Finch started to keep copies of her poems from 1690 onwards. Like earlier publications in 1691, 1694, and 1696, her signature poem, “The Spleen”,⁵³⁹ was published anonymously in Charles Gildon’s *New Collection of Poems on Several Occasions* in 1701. More poems appeared in print in several other publications, before her *Miscellany Poems, on Several Occasions* was entered in the Stationer’s Register in 1713.⁵⁴⁰

Finch’s poems cover a wide range of different genres and topics. Next to her best-known poems such as “The Spleen” and “A Nocturnal Reverie”, which William Wordsworth praised in his supplementary essay to the preface of *Lyrical Ballads* (1815) and which has shaped the Finch-reception as a nature-poet until today,⁵⁴¹ Finch was a versatile writer well versed in religious and love poems, fables, nature poems, odes, pastoral, and, as expected of a woman of her time, occasional poetry to friends and relatives.⁵⁴² For Backscheider, Finch is the literary epitome of an early eighteenth-century women poet, “for she represents the possibility of a life as a poet for woman

⁵³⁶ For a brief biographical introduction, see the *DNB*-entry on Finch written by Barbara McGovern (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9426?docPos=2>; last visit 19 Mar. 2013), who also published with *Anne Finch and her Poetry. A Critical Biography* (1992) both a well-researched biography of the poet as well as a thorough and biographically informed reading of Finch’s works. Myra Reynolds’s *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchelsea* (1903) – and especially its 134-page “Introduction to the life, work and critical reception” – is still seminal for any discussion of Finch’s poems and life. Lastly, Lonsdale’s short biographical account of Finch’s life in his *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989) as well as *Orlando Project* provides further helpful information.

⁵³⁷ Of the other maids of honour, it is probably the poet Anne Killigrew who is still best known today. According to Reynolds (1903) there is however, no evidence of any particular friendship between the two writers (see xxiii).

⁵³⁸ Her husband, the courtier-soldier Heneage Finch, cousin and heir of the Earl of Winchelsea and former gentleman of the bedchamber of the Duke of York, supported her writing and served as a lifelong mentor, editor, and transcriber of her works, see McGovern (1992), p. 68ff.

⁵³⁹ See also Introduction, p.3 and Appendix, p. 275.

⁵⁴⁰ See “Anne Finch”, *Orlando*, <http://orlando.cambridge.org>; last visit 10 June 2012. Besides the printed works, there are three still existing manuscripts from which several critical editions, e.g. Finch (1903; ed. Reynolds) and *The Anne Finch Wellesley Manuscript Poems* (1998; ed. McGovern), derive.

⁵⁴¹ It was not only Wordsworth who buttressed Finch’s literary reputation, for during her lifetime both Swift and Pope had supported and encouraged her career. For a detailed discussion, see Barbara McGovern, “Finch, Pope and Swift: The Bond of Displacement.” *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*. Ed. Donald C. Mell. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996. 105-124.

⁵⁴² See Backscheider (2008), p. 29.

in the first quarter of the century and what such a vocation or career might look like.”⁵⁴³

Due to “The Spleen”, which is usually read as an autobiographical text, and several letters,⁵⁴⁴ Finch has been generally known as suffering from bouts of melancholy, or depression throughout her life – McGovern even speaks of a “manic-depressive disorder”.⁵⁴⁵ This is important, since although Finch’s poems defy melancholy, they are nonetheless recognised as melancholic due to the author’s biography and her personal suffering of melancholy and depression.⁵⁴⁶

Leaving alleged personal reasons for Finch’s sufferings aside, Heather Meek diagnoses a politically and culturally motivated female form of “civic melancholy” in the works of Finch and other eighteenth-century women writers “as they express grief as a reflection of and response to national difficulties and upheavals.”⁵⁴⁷ Hence Finch’s melancholy, or “hysteria” as Meek puts it, is an ambivalent moment in the poems since it is “at once private, public, destructive and liberating” and legitimises Finch’s female authorship.⁵⁴⁸ And yet, Finch’s melancholy poems are not restricted to

⁵⁴³ Backscheider (2008), p. 29. The selection of Finch’s poems published in recent decades is restricted to a small number. Besides “The Spleen”, modern anthologies usually fall back on “A Nocturnal Reverie” and “The Introduction” and hence present Finch either as country and nature-poet or as major contributor to a feminist literary tradition. In his article “Critics and Criticism in the Poetry of Anne Finch” (2011), Michael Gavin defies the rather one-sided literary criticism of Finch and her poetry and strives for a twofold aim: to examine and discuss the function of criticism within Finch’s poems as “an instrument for advancing poetry” (634) and to reflect how her poetry, in return, is represented by modern critics. As a by-product of his discussion, Gavin provides a broad summary of the critical Finch-reception of the last few decades.

⁵⁴⁴ For selected letters, see Reynolds (1903). Like other biographers, Reynolds suggests the collapse of the Royalists and the Jacobite cause amongst other reasons for Finch’s melancholy and buttresses this suggestion with Finch’s “The Preface”: “I must acknowledge, yt the giving some interruptions to those melancholy thoughts, which possesst me, not only for my own, but much more for the misfortunes of those to whom I owe all imaginable duty, and gratitude, was so great a benefit, that I have reason to be satisfied with the undertaking, be the performance never so inconsiderable. And, indeed, an absolute solitude (which often was my lott) under such dejection of the mind, could not have been supported, had I indulged myself (as was too natural to me) only in the contemplation of the present and real afflictions, which I hope will plead my excuse, for turning them to relief, upon such as were imaginary, and relating to persons no more in being” (12; also see Reynolds (1903), pp. xxix-xxx).

⁵⁴⁵ McGovern (1992), p. 160.

⁵⁴⁶ For a recent discussion of Anne Finch and her suffering from depression and melancholy, see Harrison (2011), pp. 104-111.

⁵⁴⁷ Meek (“Sociosomatic Hysteria”, 2011), p. 391. Meek refers here to Eric Gidal’s concept of eighteenth-century “civic melancholy,” which “unites the sceptical peevishness of the melancholic soul with the civic virtue of the magnanimous hero [...]. Grounded in classical and medieval humoral theory, yet aligned with the methods and aspirations of the Enlightenment, this tradition understands melancholy as the dark undercurrent of political identification, removing the individual from vain aspirations and luxurious self-indulgence while simultaneously promoting civic ideals and public engagement” (Gidal (2003), p. 25f.). Also see above FN 316. For the political implications of melancholy, also see the analysis of Mary Chudleigh’s elegy “On the Death of his Highness the Duke of Gloucester”, chap. 4.2 in this study.

⁵⁴⁸ Meek (“Sociosomatic Hysteria”, 2011), p. 396.

possible socio-cultural or political topics. As McGovern points out: "Taken as a group, her melancholy poems reveal a wide range of moods, from somber to satiric to lighthearted. Above all, they demonstrate her individuating tone and her refusal to approach melancholy from a popular viewpoint."⁵⁴⁹ This group of poems includes "An Invocation to Sleep", "To Death", "The Losse", "A Song of Greife" as well as "A Nocturnal Reverie", poems, which vary with regard to their "discursive" elements (in Bell's sense), but which have been read as melancholic over the last twenty years.⁵⁵⁰

The poem "Ardelia to Melancholy" is one of the most explicit texts in terms of melancholy content, as well as formal-experiential aspects.⁵⁵¹ Already the poem's title raises expectations in the reader based on melancholy's poetic tradition. Similar to Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" and Margaret Cavendish's "A Dialogue between Melancholy, and Mirth" (1653), the reader is led to expect a traditional poetic dispute between Ardelia and melancholy, or an invocation of melancholy as the speaker's muse. However, critics agree that Finch's poems on melancholy differ from the traditional notion of melancholy poetry of her time in that "Finch neither wallows in self-pity nor relinquishes all her responsibility for her own misfortunes and afflictions."⁵⁵² Unlike many of her (male) contemporaries, she resists a sentimentalised attitude to melancholy and approaches it in a rational and controlled manner.⁵⁵³

To date, Hinnant delivers the most thorough critical analysis of Finch's "Ardelia to Melancholy" and suggests a kind of multilayered reading of the poem. His approach deliberately refrains from leading to a coherent analysis, but prepares the ground for

⁵⁴⁹ McGovern (1992), p. 178.

⁵⁵⁰ Against the background of Reynolds's research, John F. Sena developed an early interest in Finch's melancholy poetry in his article "Melancholy in Anne Finch and Elizabeth Carter: The Ambivalence of an Idea" (1971). McGovern (1992) and Hinnant (1994) are seminal for the discussion of the criticism of Finch's poetic melancholy of the last twenty years. However, most of the critical texts (see above FN 6) still focus on "The Spleen" as paradigmatic and neglect Finch's other poems of melancholy.

⁵⁵¹ The poem is part of Finch's octavo manuscript, which her husband compiled around 1690-91. McGovern (1992) states that Finch "chose not to publish ["Ardelia to Melancholy"] during her lifetime" (166). This study refers to Reynolds's edition of Finch's poems (1903), which is still considered standard. All references to Finch's "Ardelia to Melancholy" refer to Reynolds (1903), p. 15. For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 281.

⁵⁵² McGovern (1992), p. 166. Or, in Sena's (1971) words: "Anne Finch's treatment of melancholy in 'Ardelia to Melancholy', [...], thus exemplifies one contemporary attitude toward the malady. To those of her persuasion, melancholy was an affliction which destroyed one's physical health and mental tranquility, disrupted the rational process, stifled artistic creativity, stultified the imagination, and filled one's life with fear and sorrow. The disease was debilitating and enervating, rendering the sufferer sluggish and slow, dilatory and capricious, and subject to terrifying and absurd hallucinations. Ultimately, the affliction could terminate in insanity" (114f.).

⁵⁵³ Hinnant (1994) has made a similar statement, see p. 197. For an alternative reading of the poem, see Harrison (2011), pp. 122-125.

alternative ways of readings. Hinnant especially notes the correlation between the female imagination and patriarchy. He argues:

‘Ardelia to Melancholy’ [...] suggests a more complex and hidden relationship between the speaker and her plight than the one it ostensibly projects. The cruel tyrant [i.e. melancholy; S.B.] is an ambivalent figure of patriarchal power – the bestower of both suffering and despair; but he is accompanied in the poem by an equally threatening and insidious power – the speaker’s own imagination. What Finch as a poet wants to explore is what links these two figures – how they are bound together – and what is the twisted and perverse complicity between them.⁵⁵⁴

As my reading of the poem is also informed by the complex relationship between melancholy and Ardelia, I argue that the speaker’s poetic announcement of total defeat becomes a melancholic soliloquy and, finally, an act of poetic self-constitution through melancholy. Although melancholy is primarily presented as a pathological foreign matter of body and soul, it becomes both an immanent part of the poetic self, as well as the ‘hostile other’ necessary for the act of self-constitution.

Ardelia, Finch’s poetic persona and poet-speaker, begins her soliloquy immediately in the opening couplet – “At last, my old inveterate foe, /No opposition shalt thou know” (ll. 1-2) – and announces her surrender to melancholy. Emphatically alluding to her long fight against melancholy, this fight is phonetically represented by the dark o-sounds in l. 2. The intimate relationship between Ardelia and the physiological-psychological phenomenon is made obvious by the possessive pronoun, as well as by the adjective “inveterate”, with its temporal and medical connotations (‘chronic’). The temporal implication of “At last”, stressed by metre as well as position, adds both resignation and relief to the despondent mood of the poem.

The ostensive invocation and apostrophe of melancholy in these first lines (and throughout the text) support the reading of the poem as a complete interiorisation of melancholy and form a paramount poetic strategy of the text. By definition, the apostrophe is a trope “which consists of addressing an absent or dead person, a thing, or an absent idea as if it were alive or present. [...] The term originally referred to any abrupt ‘turning away’ from the normal audience to address a different or more specific audience, whether present or absent [...].”⁵⁵⁵ Culler, who criticises the wilful neglect of the apostrophe as a meaningless poetic convention,⁵⁵⁶ extends the apostrophe’s standard definition as a poetic device that intensifies and images a

⁵⁵⁴ Hinnant (1994), p. 203.

⁵⁵⁵ “Apostrophe”, *New Princeton Encyclopedia Of Poetry and Poetics* (1993), p. 82.

⁵⁵⁶ See Culler (1981/2002), p. 150f.

particular passion, object or idea. Upon the basic supposition that the apostrophe generally establishes a relationship between (two) subjects (of which one might be inanimate and/or absent), Culler posits two further functions useful for my reading of “Ardelia to Melancholy”, which I will hence adopt: the constitution of the poet him- or herself and the inherent “radical act of interiorization and solipsism.”⁵⁵⁷

By deliberately disengaging from society – in itself already a melancholic gesture – and invoking melancholy as an addressee, Ardelia establishes an ambivalent relationship in which she becomes both poetic subject as well as object: poetic subject, since she is the one who invokes and calls upon melancholy; poetic object since she initially declares herself a victim of melancholy and becomes its prey.⁵⁵⁸ However, what activates the apostrophe so significantly in this poem is Ardelia’s eventual power over melancholy gained through the poetic act of invoking melancholy in order to oust it, or at least to keep it at bay.

Interiorisation, as part of apostrophe, strongly depends on the poetic act of successfully establishing the speaking subject and the absent other. Culler posits:

if *I* implies a *you* (in that ‘I’ means ‘your *vis-à-vis* intends himself’), to name a *you* something which in its empirical state cannot be a *you* (...) [e.g., melancholy; S.B] is a way of pre-empting the place of the *you*, placing there what can only fill that role through an ‘invisible rearing in us’. It is only as a product of poetic intervention that the object can occupy the place of the addressee.⁵⁵⁹

In the case of melancholy as part of the I/you-relationship of apostrophe, the problem is more intricate: Since melancholy, as both a pathological as well as a cultural-philosophical phenomenon, is always thought of as part of the self’s body or mind, the transference from outer body to inner mind is never explicit. The question emerging from this is how melancholy as part of the self is perceived – as an inspiring source or a ‘hostile’ other?

Hence, Finch’s “Ardelia to Melancholia” offers at least two different levels on which melancholy is negotiated and appropriated: the text proclaims the speaker’s surrender and total resignation, and displays a strong extra-literary approach to melancholy by listing all the (futile) cures and therapies against ‘hostile’ melancholy known from popular medical treatises such as Burton’s *Anatomy*; on the second level, the speaker deliberately invokes melancholy as an immanent part of her self, renders her emotional experience of melancholy and ultimately constitutes her poetic self by revelling in and, at the same time, resisting melancholy.

⁵⁵⁷ Culler (1981/2002), p. 157 and 162.

⁵⁵⁸ For the subject/object-relation, see Culler (1981/2002), p. 157.

⁵⁵⁹ Culler (1981/2002), p. 162.

Besides the all-dominating apostrophe and the emphatic announcement of surrender, the first stanza demonstrates the contemporary popular knowledge of melancholy, as well as its respective cures and therapies. Generally, this first stanza works through emphasis, i.e. through stressing specific elements and creating the potent mood of dejection and hopelessness that accompanies the failure of various attempts to overcome melancholy. A striking example of this is when the speaker states that she can obtain “Nothing” (l. 4) but an increase of her sufferings by prolonging her attempts to defeat melancholy: “Nothing” is stressed at least three times by metre and caesura and its position within the line. Re-emphasising her capitulation of the opening couplet, the speaker reconnects verse five to her initial statement “I will att last, no more do so.” The closed structure of the lines one, two, and five is also provided by the repeated rhyme, the verbal and phonetic repetition of “att last”, and the numerous o-sounds.

The topical elements of the poem become more evident in the second half of the first stanza. In listing the different remedies that the speaker has tried in vain, the poem reflects lay knowledge of the treatment of melancholy as it was known, for instance, from Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. So what appears to be a short list of “Sweet mirth, and musick, and have try’d / A thousand other arts beside” (ll. 7-8), not only describes the most commonly applied remedies, it literally encompasses Burton’s endless and seemingly random suggestions: Ardelia’s “thousand other arts” to sooth the melancholic body and mind.⁵⁶⁰ All these attempts “To drive thee from my darken’d breast” (l. 9) prove to be futile, and Ardelia realises that although all these different remedies and medicines “a short reprieve they gave” (l. 11), they are consequently “Unable [...], and far too weak, to save” (l. 12). The poetic text performs its own topic: as insufficient and patchy (at best) as these remedies are in helping to overcome melancholy, the text presents itself as insufficient by the ellipsis of the verb in line 12.

The final couplet of the first stanza “All arts to quell, did but augment thy force, / As rivers check’d, break with a wilder course” (ll. 13-14) also marks the end of the multitude of therapies against melancholy. Emphasising the indomitable nature of melancholy and irrepressible vehemence of its physical cause, black bile (which has already ‘darkened’ the heart of Ardelia in line nine), the simile of the river as the

⁵⁶⁰ For music and mirth as remedies for melancholy, see Burton (1621/2001), part. II, pp. 115-126.

bodily fluid – and, by analogy the melancholic's uncontrollable thoughts –⁵⁶¹ aptly captures and renders the medical layman's understanding of the four *humores*. As a consequence, the despairing insight that neither medical nor fine art can control or cure the force of black bile, impresses itself on the reader.

Whereas stanza one establishes the status quo of the speaker in her fight with melancholy, stanzas two and three single out two particular and speaker-specified ways to treat melancholy: friendship and poetry. Each stanza of the poem is closed in itself in terms of content-related and formal aspects, as well as the development of the overall argument. "Freindship, I to my heart have laid / Freindship, th' applauded sov'rain aid" (ll. 15-16), is not just "applauded" but is seemingly a most powerful remedy, which Ardelia wilfully (ab)uses to overcome melancholy. Friendship's force, which becomes discernible through the anaphoric use of the word in lines 15 and 16, is embodied in "that charm" (l. 17) from which Ardelia hopes "so strong would prove, / As to compell thee, to remove" (ll. 17-18). Glossed over by "Charm['s]" double meaning as a magic spell and as the proverbial feminine charm of women friends, the actual concept of friendship is seriously at stake: the obvious inadequacy of friendship as a remedy mirrors the painful lack of the friend within the poem. Using the idea of friendship, rather than a 'real' companion, as a means to fight melancholy, Ardelia is on her own in this battle. The only 'friend' present is melancholy, who at the same time is also her "old invertebrate foe." The place usually reserved for the friend, i.e. the heart ("my darken'd breast", l. 9), is here already occupied – by melancholy.

Against the background of friendship, the martial imagery, apparent throughout the poem, underlines the 'practical' value of Ardelia's notion of friendship ("united charge", l. 24) as a weapon against melancholy. Imagining herself at first as "conqu'rer" of her self, she needs again to realise that melancholy prevails in its martial terms in the end:

And to myself, I boasting said,
Now I a conqu'rer sure shall be,
The end of all my conflicts, see,
And noble triumph, wait on me,
My dusky, sullen foe, will sure
N'er this united charge endure. (ll. 19-24; my emphasis)

The disempowerment of friendship is also embodied in Ardelia's paradoxical metaphor of reed as friendship. Contrary to reed's proverbial durability, friendship

⁵⁶¹ For the river-simile, see Burton (1621/2001), "Democritus to the Reader", p. 32.

like reed “pierc’d my hand, and into peices broke” (l. 26). Obviously alluding to the popular fable of “The Oak and the Reed” (either Aesop’s or Jean de la Fontaine’s version), and to the reed’s famous line “I bend, indeed, but never break”,⁵⁶² friendship does not endure the storm of melancholy – it just snaps and wounds. The end of friendship, “new objects” and “new int’rests” (l. 27), “disolv’d the claim” to win the war, hence the second stanza again ends with Ardelia’s surrender.

The third and last stanza of the poem introduces Ardelia’s ultimate remedy – poetry. With melancholy remaining the primary addressee, the muse poetry appears as a crucial ally in Ardelia’s war – the martial word-paradigm reaches its climax with poetry as the last resort – and is remembered in hindsight as a promising remedy, in that Ardelia experienced poetry “To guard me from thy Tyrant pow’r; / And to oppose thee ev’ry hour / New troops of fancy’s, did I chuse” (ll. 31-33; my emphasis). Poetry appears not to be ignited by melancholy as such, but is, of course, closely related to it. Thus writing poetry is a symptom of melancholy as well as a cure, and the experience of writing becomes a constitutive feature of the poetic-melancholic self.

The poetic self owes its constitution to the dominant apostrophe by which the poetic voice is established.⁵⁶³ The explicit negation of melancholy not only confirms its own ubiquitous presence, but concomitantly displays its powerful inspiration of the self’s poetic writing. It is certainly no coincidence that Burton’s famous dictum “I writ of melancholy by being busy to avoid melancholy”⁵⁶⁴ is performed in the poem, as the speaker experiences, suffers from, and at the same time defies melancholy. It is by these means that Ardelia fights her battle, and by these means that she constitutes herself as a poet.

Ludwig Völker convincingly states that the constitution of the poetic self through and against melancholy can also be understood as an act of self-defence: “While the melancholic self constitutes itself as poetic, while it poetically expresses its own melancholy, it takes a position in which it is not completely exposed to melancholy.”⁵⁶⁵ Thus, by accepting the melancholy experience, Ardelia gains control over her “foe” and uses it for her own purpose: to write poetry.

⁵⁶² Fontaine (1882), <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/8ffab10h.htm>; last visit 12 Sept. 2012.

⁵⁶³ Although apostrophe as such certainly proffers the act of self-constitution, see Culler (1981/2002), p. 157.

⁵⁶⁴ Burton (1621/2001), “Democritus to the Reader”, p. 20.

⁵⁶⁵ Völker (1978), p. 8, my translation; German original: “Indem das melancholische Ich sich als lyrisches Ich konstituiert, indem es seiner Melancholie lyrischen Ausdruck verleiht, bezieht es eine

And yet, like friendship and all other cures and therapies before, writing poetry is still “Alas! in vain” (l. 34) – despite the paradoxical existence of the poem itself. Ardelia remains “captive up to thee” (l. 35). In the last part of the third stanza, the persona refers back to her initial surrender and closes the text’s circle. With her language still martially informed, she realises that

Thou, through my life, wilt with me goe,
And make ye passage, sad, and slow.
All, that cou’d ere thy ill gott rule, invade,
Their useless arms, before thy feet have laid. (ll. 37-40)

Only now she seems fully aware of the fact that melancholy will remain her companion – or better, is an immanent, however ‘hostile’ part of her own self (see l. 37). The slow and staccato-like monosyllabic ending of line 38 combined with the s-alliteration of the line (“sad, and slow”), mimic the now appeased, however sluggish movement of black bile through her body. Totally capitulating and symbolically putting down her “useless arms” in verse 40,⁵⁶ the poet-speaker closes the poem by acknowledging total defeat of her body and mind: “The Fort is thine, now ruin’d all within, / Whilst by decays without, thy Conquest too is seen” (ll. 41-42). With that, Ardelia falls silent and disperses in melancholy.

Several instances and poetic devices, such as the apostrophe, support the reading of the poem as an interiorised monologue or melancholic soliloquy rather than as a poetic invocation. The intimate relationship between Ardelia and melancholy, which is established in the first verse through “my old inveterate foe” (my emphasis), becomes augmented through the internalisation of melancholy as part of the poetic self, e.g. in verse ten in which the speaker differs between her melancholic self and “the rest”: “Thou, who hast banish’d all my rest” (my emphasis). Lines such as “And to myself, I boasting said, / Now I a conqu’rer sure shall be” (ll. 19-20, my emphasis) further underline the soliloquy-character of the text. The primary structure under which this interiorisation takes place is, however, the apostrophe. As a prototypical device, it implicitly links Finch’s poem to the literary tradition of melancholy. However, it remains ambivalent. Resisting melancholy and revelling in it appear to be closely related. Although Ardelia vehemently resists and defies melancholy, there remains the moment in which the very act of writing melancholy becomes a revelling

Position, von der aus es der Melancholie nicht mehr völlig preisgegeben scheint.” For a further discussion of poetry as remedy, see Rousseau (“Medicine and the Muses”, 1993).

⁵⁶ In this context, I understand Ardelia’s “useless arms” as both weapons (including the pen) as well as her lose limbs as a sign of final surrender.

in it. For Ardelia writing is the last resort, the cure that is so yearned for but, at the same time, represents her final defeat.

“[T]he pensive songstress”: Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s “Despair” (1739)

Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737) is known as one of the most famous woman writers of the eighteenth century. As then, critics today celebrate Singer Rowe’s highly influential position and extraordinary standing within literary history, emphasising the high number of editions of her works in the century after her death.⁵⁶⁷ Despite this ‘success’, she is also one of the most neglected eighteenth-century woman writers with respect to critical discussion of her written works in verse and prose.⁵⁶⁸ Singer Rowe’s social background was considerably shaped by her non-conformist upbringing, as well as her father’s, Walter Singer, connection to the increasingly affluent, rising middle class of the provincial town Frome.⁵⁶⁹ She received a basic education and probably attended a boarding school in the country. Her father’s acquaintance with Henry Thynne, son to the Viscount of Weymouth, was a decisive moment in Singer Rowe’s career,⁵⁷⁰ since he henceforth tutored her. She became not only a kind of protégé of the family in general, but also established a life-long friendship and correspondence with Thynne’s young daughter, Frances, later Countess of Hertford (1699-1754).⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ As one of the latest critics, Chantel M. Lavoie (2009) mentions at least 89 editions of Singer Rowe’s works up until 1840 (see 40). Singer Rowe’s biographer Henry F. Stecher (1973) lists the different editions in the appendix of his book *Elizabeth Singer Rowe, the Poetess of Frome* (see 235-238).

⁵⁶⁸ This apparent lack has also been commented on by Sarah Prescott (2001, see p. 29). Indeed, since Madeleine Forell Marshall’s monography *The Poetry of Elizabeth Singer Rowe, (1674-1737)* (1987), there have been merely shorter critical discussions on the poet’s poetic works (most notably Backscheider (2008)). More recently, Paula R. Backscheider worked on *Elizabeth Singer Rowe and the Development of the English Novel* (2013), thus partly filling this desideratum.

⁵⁶⁹ The majority of biographical accounts of Singer Rowe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is based on Theophilus Rowe’s “The Life of Mrs. Rowe” which preceded Singer Rowe’s *The Miscellaneous Works of Verse and Prose* (1739); in the twentieth century, Stecher (1973) offers a more psychological reading of her life and works. In recent decades, only shorter biographical accounts appeared, focusing on various specific aspects: e.g. Sarah Prescott: “Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737): Politics, Passion and Piety” (2003); Madeleine Forell Marshall: “Elizabeth Singer Rowe” (1990); Jennifer Keith: “Elizabeth Carter (16 December 1717 - 19 February 1806)” (1991). All biographical information is drawn from the above mentioned sources; the respective author will be marked if quoted or paraphrased.

⁵⁷⁰ As Sarah Prescott demonstrates in her study *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (2003, esp. part III, chap. 6) that the provincial setting of Frome (Somersetshire) assisted Singer Rowe in her literary endeavours, rather than restricting her. Although far away from London as the contemporary centre of print culture and literary industry, Singer Rowe’s geographical position combined with her connection to the family of the Viscount of Weymouth and her strong dissenting background and network, were the main columns of her literary career.

⁵⁷¹ Although Frances, Lady Hertford occupies an influential position as patron of numerous poets like James Thomson, Stephen Duck as well as a correspondent, e.g. of William Shenstone and Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough (see also chap. 3.2, FN 627), only Helen Sard Hughes’s article “Elizabeth

From the early 1690s onwards, Singer Rowe's poems appeared anonymously – "the Pindarick Lady" and "Philomela" were her early *noms de plume* – in *The Athenian Mercury*, a London journal edited by the bookseller John Dunton, also founder of the Athenian Society. Dunton was not a dissenter himself, but the periodical, which offered answers to questions concerning literature, philosophy, sciences etc., showed tolerant views regarding religious dissent and Whiggish politics, both components favourable to Singer Rowe's background.⁵⁷² The name of Singer Rowe's poetic self, "Philomela", might go back to Dunton and probably alludes to "the poetic implications of her maiden name Singer, as opposed to the Ovidian source."⁵⁷³

After refusing several admirers, Singer Rowe married the biographer and poet Thomas Rowe, who died in 1715. The death of her husband was a decisive moment in her life and work. Firstly, Singer Rowe retired from London, where she had lived with her husband, and returned to Frome. Nevertheless, Singer Rowe kept friendly and literary relationships with Isaac Watts, Matthew Prior and particularly Frances, Lady Hertford, through whom Singer Rowe became acquainted with Anne Finch and James Thomson. Secondly, Singer Rowe's elegy "On the death of Mr THOMAS ROWE" not only became her signature poem, for which she became generally celebrated throughout the eighteenth century, it also delineated what was to become the theme for the rest of her literary life: death.⁵⁷⁴ The poems written after the death of her husband helped to shape her image as the recluse and widow, the pious, religious, and respectable woman writer and role model.

The construction of "The Pious Mrs. ROWE"⁵⁷⁵ was greatly enhanced by the publication of Singer Rowe's *Miscellaneous Works in Verse and Prose* (2 vols; 1739), edited by Theophilus Rowe. The *Works* were preceded by the first official

Rowe and the Countess of Hertford" (1944) focuses on the relationship between one of the most influential patrons and popular writers of their time.

⁵⁷² See Richards (2003), p. xiv and Prescott (2001), p. 33.

⁵⁷³ Prescott ("Singer Rowe", 2003), p. 72. Nevertheless, Philomela, of course, does allude to Ovid's story as will be thematised below. Myra Reynolds (1920) calls Singer Rowe's pen name "a naive adaptation" (158). Theophilus Rowe (1739), Singer Rowe's brother-in-law and her first official biographer, stresses both the modesty of her literary pseudonym in general and its poetic-Miltonic tradition in particular: "The latter [i.e. that the name "Philomela" was given to her; S.B.] is most probable, and that it was given to her at the publication of her poems, before which her modesty not consenting that her own name should appear, this was substituted in the room of it, as bearing a very easy allusion to it, and happily expressing the softness and harmony of the verses, not less soothing and melodious than the strains of the nightingale, when from some leafy shade she fills the woods with her melancholy complaints" (xvi).

⁵⁷⁴ First published in 1717 in Bernard Lintot's *Poems on Several Occasions: by His Grace the Duke of Buckingham [...] and other eminent hands* (1717), the elegy also appeared in the appendix of the second edition of Pope's "Eloise and Abelard" in 1720 and is until today one of the most frequently anthologised poems of Singer Rowe.

⁵⁷⁵ See Hansen's article of the same title (1995).

biographical account of the poet, “The Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe”, written by Henry Grove and completed by Theophilus Rowe. It served as the foundation stone for Singer Rowe’s further reputation and literary reception. Throughout the eighteenth century, “Life” was repeatedly published, altered, and condensed.⁵⁷⁶ The biographical account has often been criticised for its construction of the ‘pious writer’ and the omission of Singer Rowe’s premarital poetry, which was compiled in *Poems by several Occasions, by Philomela*. It is a widely held view that this omission enabled the glossing over of potential inconsistencies in respect to her allegedly pious character and her former authorial self.⁵⁷⁷

The role of melancholy within this intricate fabric of literature and myth-making is quite intriguing. There are many conspicuous moments in which Singer Rowe is discussed in terms of melancholy, and yet all mention of it is subdued. Particularly, religious despair and enthusiasm were both prominent forms of eighteenth-century melancholy and were particularly gender-specific,⁵⁷⁸ and it is hardly surprising that these melancholy varieties were mentioned with regard to Singer Rowe. Consequently, her contemporary biographers such as Theophilus Rowe, together with her friend and posthumous editor Isaac Watt, tried hard to dispel these suspicions, which could have seriously altered and damaged her carefully constructed reputation as the pious and virtuous woman writer.

Rowe does not tire of underlining the singularity of the poet’s outspokenly virtuous character and strong mental disposition, especially in respect of her allegedly absolute retirement and reclusiveness. Hence despite the common effects such reclusiveness may have on other people – “such great abstinence from every kind of recreation, might, in most persons, tend to sour the mind with austere and

⁵⁷⁶ Chantel M. Lavoie points out that every succeeding biographical account of Singer Rowe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is, to a certain degree, a condensed version of this life narrative (see Lavoie (2009), p. 46). Being reprinted in shortened versions in numerous biographical compendiums, e.g. *Biographium Faemineum* and *Beauties of Biography*, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* serialised Rowe’s “Life” from May 1739 - February 1740, an incident which had been arranged by Elizabeth Carter (see Clarke (2005), p. 46).

⁵⁷⁷ Hansen (1995) argues that the construction of the pious “‘Mrs. Rowe’ [was made; S.B.] on the ashes of her former self, Elizabeth Singer [...]. Both personae were to a large extent created by the men who were patrons to and published her work: Elizabeth Singer, or ‘Philomela’, by John Dunton, and Elizabeth Rowe by her brother-in-law Theophilus Rowe” (36). That the induced separation between the younger, and more secular authorial self ‘Philomela’ (and ‘Elizabeth Singer’) versus the devotional ‘Mrs. Rowe’ might not be as clear cut as stressed by Grove and Rowe, has been shown by Norma Clarke (2000). She demonstrates the ways in which Singer Rowe bridged her younger and her mature poetic persona through “[p]assion rather than piety” (353) and how the next generation of women writers like Elizabeth Carter, accepted her as a valiant eighteenth-century role model both as ‘Philomela’ and ‘Mrs. Rowe’.

⁵⁷⁸ For religious melancholy and gender, see chap. 4.1, p. 186.

unamiably dispositions; or at least to depress the spirits to such a degree of melancholy, as would unfit them for the necessary duties and offices of life" – 'Mrs. Rowe's' "constant vivacity and chearfulness [...] might possibly seem to set her above the necessity of allowing herself proper intervals of amusement to relax the mind."⁵⁷⁹

Against the background of Singer Rowe's alleged cheerful and pious disposition, Rowe presents his version of 'Mrs. Rowe' free from any melancholy, no matter if religious or fashionable, which was conceived as a typical female disorder and character fault. Conceding a single exception of her otherwise non-melancholic existence, Rowe admits:

She possessed a large measure of that serenity and chearfulness of temper, which seem naturally to flow from conscious virtue, and the hopes of divine fervour. This happy disposition of mind, which is more than once recommended in the sacred writings, and is so great an ornament to sincere piety, continued with Mrs Rowe to her last moments, and was never interrupted by any of those fantastical disorders that so often cloud the imagination of the softer sex; so that (excepting the intervals of sorrow, occasioned by her devout and compassionate dispositions, and just afflictions for the loss of Mr. Rowe and Mr. Singer.) Her whole life seemed not only a constant calm, but a perpetual sunshine, end every hour of it sparkled with good humour, and inoffensive gaiety.⁵⁸⁰

Despite the careful dilution of all possible melancholy concerns, the correspondence between the poet Matthew Prior and Elizabeth Singer Rowe from 1703-1704 (during her premarital and more secular phase as 'Philomela') builds a small, but telling case against the later construction of the non-melancholic 'Mrs. Rowe'. From that correspondence, of which only Prior's letters have survived, it becomes obvious that not only did he have a considerable professional and, possibly, private interest in her, he was also convinced that she was affected by the spleen and melancholy – maladies which he appropriated for himself in his letters and for his poetic selves.⁵⁸¹

"You have contrefaited the Spleen so long, Dear Philomela, that I begin to fancy you have it in Earnest, your melancholly Gloom & unfrequented Shades, Dying Strains & complaining Lyres are sure Symptoms of a Person very far gone in that Distemper [...]," Prior writes to Singer Rowe in 1703 and emphatically advises her to "get into Company [...]"⁵⁸² The correspondence between Singer Rowe and this established

⁵⁷⁹ Rowe (1739), p. lxvi.

⁵⁸⁰ Rowe (1739), p. xcv.

⁵⁸¹ For instance in "Written in the Beginning of Mezeray's History of France", "The Despairing Shepherd", "Solomon on the Vanity of the World", "To Cloe Weeping", "To Dr. Sherlock, on his Practical Discourse Concerning Death" to name but a few.

⁵⁸² According to *The Matthew Prior Project* (<http://conan.lib.muohio.edu/prior//index.php>; last visit 29 Mar. 2013), Wright (1945) is a reliable source for Prior's correspondence with Singer Rowe. I therefore quote from his article, here p. 77.

poet exposes the cracks in the otherwise all too smooth facade of 'Mrs. Rowe' and leaves considerable doubts about the negotiation of melancholy in this construct.

Wright reconnects this particular letter with a poem that 'Philomela' might have sent to the elder poet in one of her letters. "Despair", Wright argues, shows all the melancholy markers Prior cites in his letter⁵⁸³ and through which the older poet implicitly equips the more secular 'Philomela' with a highly melancholic poetic self.⁵⁸⁴ First published in *Miscellaneous Works* (1739), the poem does not hold what the title seems to promise.⁵⁸⁵ Through the allusion to despair as one of the main symptoms as well as causes of melancholy (especially of religious melancholy), the title as a paratext of the poem misleads the reader's expectations. Although the text successfully uses the apostrophe as a leading poetic device, it does not invoke despair in order to overcome it or seek poetic inspiration. Instead, it revolves around the glorified movement of its speaker away from society towards a poetically imagined grove, and finally, grave. Like this desired movement to the grove/grave, the constitution of 'Philomela' as a nascent poetic-melancholic self belies the title of the poem by revelling in a pensive, sweet-melancholic poetic mood and challenges the reader's predetermined expectation.⁵⁸⁶

The apostrophe is one of the most prominent devices of the poem, and in this case is 'mutable'. By this I refer to an apostrophe in which the addressee becomes interchangeable with other related phenomena. In the case of this poem, it is ambiguous whether the speaker actually apostrophises Despair – as the title of the poem suggests – or whether the addressee could be changed for similar or related phenomena like melancholy, sadness, the poetic muse and so on.

The poem commences with the traditional apostrophe highlighted by the vocative "OH!", (l. 1). Though it is unstressed in terms of metre, the invocation is automatically stressed *qua* position and exclamation mark. The verb "lead" (l. 1), however, is emphasised and hence points towards one of the important aspects of the poem: the speaker's movement to a place which, at first, is an 'unknown somewhere,' and becomes further specified only towards the end of the poem.

⁵⁸³ Wright (1945), p. 76.

⁵⁸⁴ Besides "Despair" and other melancholic poems such as "The Conflagration" and "Thoughts on Death", Singer Rowe's oeuvre invites (even demands) a melancholic critical reading, which has yet to be done.

⁵⁸⁵ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 282.

⁵⁸⁶ Unlike "Despair", in which the title is contradictory to the phenomenon the poem negotiates, Singer Rowe's melancholic poem "By Despair" (1696; later "On Despair" (1739)) keeps its promise of gloom, sadness, pain, and desperation.

This imagined space that the female persona and poet-speaker longs for, is mainly characterised by solitude and silence – the standard elements of the traditional poetic-melancholy, pastoral-like retreat: “some solitary gloom, /Where no enliv’ning beams, nor chearful echoes come” (ll. 1-2). The negated adjectives “enliv’ning” and “chearful” provide the first hint of the speaker’s desired destination and merges associations of grove and grave – here, the change of a single vowel can change the world. “[S]ilent” and “dusky” (l. 3), the recess is most importantly “Remote and unfrequented, but by me;” (l. 4). The action of moving to an as yet unknown place is paired up with a process of individualisation in which the speaker not only disengages herself from society, but also lays claim to her singularity by withdrawing to this particular place (emphasised by the metrical stress on “bút by mé”). Both the speaker’s spatial distance, as well as her pronounced singularity are marked by the caesura preceding “but by my”. Further associating this longed for place with her emotional state, the persona creates common ground between the two – “Mysterious, close, and sullen as that grief, /Which leads me to its covert for relief” (ll. 5-6) – and thus transforms the desired solitary space into both a shelter for her emotions and a remedy for them.

The spatial distance and social disengagement of the speaker from society (“the busy world”, l. 7) and the striving towards the desired space, which is “Far from” (l. 7, 9, 12) everything known, is essential to her process of individualisation. The anaphora “Far from” underlines both the speaker’s repulsion of society and its follies, as well as the spatial distance both between herself and the members of this society and between the imagined place and the (rest of the) world:

Far from the busy world’s detested noise,
Its wretched pleasures, and distracted joys;
Far from the jolly fools, who laugh, and play,
And dance, and sing, impertinently gay,
Their short, inestimable hours away;
Far from the studious follies of the great,
The tiresome farce of ceremonious state (ll. 9-13).

This passage is also significant with regard to the interplay between poetic structure and meaning: the anaphora “Far from” introduces a tripartition that is mirrored throughout the passage. This superordinated structure is echoed in the first couplet by the three repulsive appositions of the “busy world” – its “detested noise”, “wretched pleasures”, and “distracted Joys”. Again reflecting the original tripartition, the following triplet is designated by five monosyllabic verbs and

adjectives (ll. 9-10),⁵⁸⁷ which describe the fools of the world. This list of short adjectives renders a feeling of light-heartedness, which is emphasised by the iambic pentameter and finds an abrupt ending in the “short, inestimable hours” – again stressed on “shórt, [...] hóurs” – and the serious thought of the “fools” wasting their life. To the “fools” and their various follies so far mentioned, the speaker adds another group of ‘fools’ (and thus stays within her pattern of three) in the last couplet of this passage: “the great” and their “studious follies” (l. 12). Characteristics that are usually admired and idealised are turned into “The tiresome farce of ceremonious State” (l. 13), adding an almost satirical tone to the text. Beyond the aspect of interplay, the passage reveals a deep contempt for the world and conventional living, which is symptomatic of the melancholic mind.

Moving away from a despicable world in the second part of the poem, the speaker’s attention shifts towards ‘the other’ place. The construction of the speaker as a melancholic-poetic self is closely linked to this active movement towards the grove, as well as to the space itself. Only “There” (l. 14) the speaker can transform into her melancholic-poetic self:

There, in a melting, solemn, dying strain,
Let me, all day, upon my lyre complain,
And wind up all its soft harmonious strings,
To noble, serious, melancholy things (ll. 14-17)

Based on ancient Greek notions of the (male) poet (e.g. of Orpheus, or of the three Apollonian muses Apollonis, Cephisso, and Borysthenis, that embody the three strings of their father’s lyre), the poet-speaker imagines her poetic self furnished with the lyre and her tunes, i.e. her poetry, marked by melancholic sadness. This *tristesse* is heightened by the asyndetons in lines 14 and 17, according to which the persona’s ‘song’ grapples with “noble, serious, melancholy things” in a “melting, solemn, dying” way, mirroring again the tripartition from the beginning of the poem and thus creating a coherent counter-world to “wretched pleasures” (l. 5) and “detested noise” (l. 4).

At this point, the invocational nature of the poem increases when the persona disengages herself from the world. In combination with her ardent wish for individualisation and singularity, the pressing tone of her voice underlines the prayer-like character of the invocation: “And let no human foot, but mine, e’er trace / The close recesses of the sacred place” (ll. 18-19). However, it is not only human

⁵⁸⁷ There are actually six adjectives, but “jolly” is disyllabic and thus an exception.

company that the persona shuns. She also dismisses the company of birds, i.e. of other poetic rivals. Solely the nightingale – “the pensive songstress” (l. 22) – and thus herself, is allowed within the “sacred place” of the grove:

Nor let a bird of chearful note come near,
To whisper out his airy raptures here.
Only the pensive songstress of the grove,
Let her, by mine, her mournful notes improve; (ll. 20-23).

Stressing the mournful nature of her songs, the poetic self is constructed by conflating the speaker and the melancholy nightingale. From this conflation emerges the melancholic-poetic and authorial self of the text: ‘Philomela’. The literary construct of ‘Philomela’ provides the speaker with wider mythological and literary traditions to inscribe herself within, beyond the rather simple allusion to the author’s maiden name, Singer. The best-known allusion is clearly to Ovid’s popular tale of “Procne and Philomela” in which Philomela, after being raped, mutilated, and silenced, is transformed into a nightingale.⁵⁸⁸ The other important reference – also in respect to melancholy – is the nightingale in Milton’s *Il Penseroso*. Here, in the prototype of melancholy poetry, the nightingale – “Sweet bird that shunn’st the noise of folly / Most musically, most melancholy” (ll. 61-62) is closely identified with the poet-speaker.⁵⁸⁹ Thus, the persona inscribes herself into two complementary traditions that highlight her being a (female) poet, as well as referring to her personal pain.⁵⁹⁰

The poem as a whole also formally aligns the poet-speaker with the nightingale. Firstly, by the parallel structure in lines 15 and 23, which connect “Let me” and “Let her”; and secondly, and more palpably, in line 23 when the voices of the nightingale and the speaker are fused to one. Yet even more than fused or complemented, the poetic voice supersedes the natural voice of the nightingale and renders Philomela even more melancholic than her bird itself: “Let her, by mine, her mournful notes improve”. The duet of the nightingale and ‘Philomela’ is enriched by the pathetic

⁵⁸⁸ See Ovid (2010), bk. 6, l. 472-780. For the feminist tradition “the nightingale became a powerful symbol for freedom and musicality and, of course, for the woman who cannot be silenced” (Bakscheider (2008), p. 108). Unlike other women writers of the same time, Singer Rowe has not been acknowledged by feminist critics. Prescott (“Singer Rowe”, 2003) points out that Singer Rowe’s reputation in particular “has made her a difficult figure to incorporate into a model of women’s literary history which insists on isolation and/or embattlement as symptomatic of female literary endeavour” (75).

⁵⁸⁹ Karen Edwards (2008) observes that the “nightingale represented in his poetry [...] Milton’s portrait as an artist” (133). Although this statement seems conventional at first, Edwards demonstrates that Milton’s representation of the nightingale “becomes increasingly marked by imaginative freedom, emotional intensity, and an identification that moves beyond the conventional” (133).

⁵⁹⁰ See Messenger (1980), p. 147. In her article “Selected Nightingales and an ‘Augustan’ Sensibility”, Messenger discusses the intricate relationship between the poet and the nightingale and its associated dualisms (e.g. art and nature) in a wider context of the tradition of literary labels such as Augustan and pre-Romantic.

fallacy of nature's "drooping winds", which "among the branches sigh" (l. 24). This alludes to the image of the sound of the lyre (see l. 15-16; here "to wind up" or put in tune the lyre's strings), and the "sluggish waters", which "heavily roll by" (l. 25).

At last, the poet-speaker continues moving and reaches her final destination in the most literal sense. Indicated by the deictic "Here" in verse 26, the imagined grove turns into the longed-for grave:

Here, to my fatal sorrows let me give
The short remaining hours I have to live,
Then, with a sullen, deep fetch'd groan expire,
And to the grave's dark solitude retire. (ll. 26-29)

Dedicating her "short remaining hours" (l. 26) to sorrow (and alleged 'Despair'), Philomela invokes her muse to grant her last breath to be "a sullen, deep fetch'd groan", which does not only end the poet-speaker's life and suffering, but also her poem.

At the end of the poem, the question of the addressee becomes relevant again. Is it really despair that 'Philomela' sings to? The mood of the poem shows that its alleged addressee could easily be changed to melancholy or sadness. Thus, to call the apostrophe 'mutable' and to keep the question of the addressee open would seem appropriate. Yet the apostrophe implicitly also refers back to Milton's melancholic poems and clearly locates Singer Rowe's poem in this tradition.

Although 'Philomela' does not self-pityingly indulge in melancholy, the poem certainly revels in the literary tradition of melancholy and ascribes itself to it. The standardised *topoi* of melancholy imagery and mood (e.g. the description of the pastoral grove) can also be traced back to Milton. The processual constitution of the poetic self through the experiencing of a soft melancholy mood and, at the same time, the "radical disengagement"⁵⁹¹ from the world are typical melancholic features. Two thirds of the poem is absorbed by the poet-speaker's withdrawal from the world first to the grove, then to an idealised grave and afterlife. Underlined by the numerous deictic forms "Where", "Far from" (3x), to "There" and, finally, "Here", 'Philomela' increasingly withdraws from a disappointing society into melancholic inwardness expressed by the typical poetic-pastoral grove, and thereby constitutes a melancholic-poetic self by first indentifying with the melancholy nightingale, and then surpassing this epitome of (male) melancholy literary tradition with her own song.

⁵⁹¹ Taylor (1989), p. 171.

“Indulge my pensive Mind”: Elizabeth Carter’s “Ode to Melancholy” (1739)

Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806) was perceived as a pious, modest, erudite, highly respectable and influential woman in her time.⁵⁹² Like the pious ‘Mrs. Rowe’, Carter’s literary and public reputation was significantly shaped by her retirement to the country, her social status as an unmarried woman, her strong focus on religious piety and social virtue, as well as her pronounced literariness.⁵⁹³ Publicly eulogising the poet’s death in “On the Death of Mrs Rowe” in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (April 1737; rev. 1739), Carter took from her predecessor important lessons about how to conduct her life as a writer. Following the cultural trail set up by Singer Rowe, Carter pursued a career as poet, scholar, and translator, and became one of the best-known intellectuals of her time.⁵⁹⁴ Overtly cerebral and highly educated (especially in the classics and languages), Carter’s reputation as a ‘learned lady’ was not without difficulties,⁵⁹⁵ as it highlighted her outstanding education and glossed over her

⁵⁹² Carter’s different facets of her public self – learned lady, scholar, and pensive poet – are also captured in Duncombe’s *The Feminiad* (1754): “Eliza, hail! your fav’rite name inspires / My rapture’d breast with sympathetic fires; / [...] With you I pierce thro’ Academic shades, / And join in Attic bow’rs Aonian maids; / Beneath the spreading Plane with Plato rove, / And hear his morals echo thro’ the grove. / Joy sparkles in the sage’s looks, to find / His genius glowing in a female mind; / Newton admiring sees your searching eye / Dart thro’ his mystic page, and range the sky; By you his colours to your sex are shown, / And Algoretti’s name to Britain known. / While undisturbed by pride, you calmly tread / Thro’ life’s perplexing paths, by Wisdom led; / And taught by her, your grateful Muse repays / her heav’nly teacher in Nocturnal Lays” (ll. 244-262).

⁵⁹³ For a more precise discussion of the similar construction of Singer Rowe’s and Carter’s public representations, see Clarke (2000), here p. 45ff.

⁵⁹⁴ Executor of her estate and official biographer, Carter’s nephew Montagu Pennington published *Memoirs Of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter* (1808, 2nd ed., 2 vols.), and several editions of her correspondences with Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu. Carter’s life is usually discussed in three different critical contexts: Carter as a successful woman writer, as a Bluestocking, and in relation to famous eighteenth-century men of letters. For the first strand, Backscheider (2008), for instance, reads Carter as a “transitional figure in the intellectual line represented by Mary Chudleigh, Constantia Grierson, and Hester Chapone, [who] created a space for herself that was both modest and assertive, [...] and a personal working life that gave her considerable freedom” (xx). Jennifer Keith’s account in Sitter’s excellent *Eighteenth-Century British Poets* (1991) is another well-researched and balanced introduction to Carter’s life and work. As for the second aspect, Sylvia Harcstark Myers as well as Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz present Carter in her exceptional role as ‘prototypical’ bluestocking in their respective books *The Bluestocking Circle* (1990) and *Brilliant Women. Eighteenth-Century Bluestockings* (2008). Lastly, Carter also held an exceptional position (different both to other women writers and female admirers), in the respective circles of Johnson and Richardson. In *Dr Johnson’s Women* (2005), Clarke provides an informative account of Carter’s life and literary relations, not just with Johnson, but also regarding her highly influential literary friendships with women writers and intellectuals of her time. All information of Carter in the following is drawn from Clarke’s detailed account, unless otherwise noted. Encompassing all three aspects and including the poetic oeuvre of Carter, see Clarissa Simek Robinson’s PhD-thesis *A Critical Edition of Elizabeth Carter’s Life and Work* (2009), see <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304845151?accountid=11531>; last visit 3 Aug. 2012.

⁵⁹⁵ As one of the first female critics of Carter, Myra Reynolds tells the long story of the *The Learned Lady in England, 1650-1760* (1920) and embeds it in the wider discourse of female education. The concept’s underlying ambivalence becomes apparent through Molière’s satire *Les Femmes savantes* (1672) and

socially ‘problematic’ status as an unmarried and childless woman. However, it was not solely her education and eruditeness which made her a ‘learned lady’ free of scorn, but the conjunction of learnedness and the public display of ‘feminine virtues’, especially piety and modesty, as well as feminine skills like needlework and housework which helped her later image of the most respectable “Mrs Carter”.⁵⁹⁶

She received an exceptionally thorough education by her father, the Reverend Nicholas Carter. Supported and advised by her father and his patron Sir George Oxenden, ‘Eliza’ (Carter’s pseudonym at the beginning of her literary career) started to publish regularly in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1734. Edward Cave, the magazine’s proprietor and editor, was a friend of Nicholas Carter and followed her career for many years. Regularly visiting London from 1735 onwards, Carter worked in London from 1738-39, and formed important literary friendships and acquaintances for the rest of her life, e.g. with Samuel Johnson and the biographer Thomas Birch.⁵⁹⁷

In 1738, Cave printed Carter’s *Poems on Particular Occasions* and her early translations. In 1739, Carter left London and retreated to Deal (Kent). Here, she wrote some of her best-known poems – “Ode to Melancholy” (1739) and “Ode to Wisdom” (1747/48), which Richardson inserted in his novel *Clarissa. Or the History of a Young Lady* without knowing who had authored it – and was introduced to the writer Catherine Talbot. It was Talbot who encouraged Carter to work on what was to become her major scholarly achievement: the translation of *All the Works of Epictetus*.

others like Thomas Wright’s *Female Virtuoso’s* (1693) that informed the image of the eighteenth-century learned woman greatly – both in terms of popular discourse (e.g. the development of a stock literary character of the Female Wit) and in terms of the cultural construction of femininity. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the debate on the eighteenth-century learned lady, see Laura Favero Carraro and Antonella Rigamonti, “Women’s Discourse on Science and Learning and the Image of the Learned Lady” for a seventeenth-century discussion in reference to Margaret Cavendish as a never accepted learned lady; for the literary stock image, see Elaine McGirr, “Learned Ladies and Female Wits.” *Eighteenth-Century Characters. A Guide to the Literature of the Age* (2007), pp. 119-131. Print; for the debate on female education, see Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth-Century. Constructions of Femininity* (1990), esp. chap. 3. For the connection between melancholy and the learned lady, see Anne C. Vila’s article “‘Ambiguous Beings’: Marginality, Melancholy and the *Femme Savante*” (2007) in which she demonstrates how one of the most learned ladies of the French Enlightenment, Mme de Staël, appropriates melancholy to stylise her heroine Corinne in the novel *Corinne, ou l’Italie* (1807) as a melancholic genius clearly in opposition to the sex- and gender-specific notions of melancholy of the time.

⁵⁹⁶ Note the anecdotes about Carter’s appearance in Clarke (2005), p. 25. As Myra Reynolds (1920) remarks on the rather loosely applied titles of “Miss” and “Mrs”, the use of “Mrs” in Carter’s case, despite her ostensibly unmarried status, underscores the social respectability which was associated with her (see 76f.).

⁵⁹⁷ Birch also tried to secure Frances, countess of Hertford, as patron for Carter. Although his attempt failed, Lady Hertford, also befriended with Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Henrietta Knight, started to correspond with Carter. In many biographical accounts, it is rumoured that Birch also had aspirations to marry Carter and that this was the reason why she left London in 1739.

Supervised by Talbot and her friend Thomas Secker between 1749-1756, the translation of the Stoic Greek philosopher appeared in 1758 by subscription and confirmed her reputation as a scholar. Another immediate effect of Carter's Epictetus-translation was the friendship forged with Elizabeth Montagu, with whom Carter became an icon of women's education and represented the literary aspirations of her female contemporaries, both within and beyond the context of the prominent Bluestocking circle.

Despite her versatility and the unusually high number of melancholic poems, Carter was not represented as melancholic in the numerous biographical accounts following her death.⁵⁹⁸ Recently, scholars have tried to build a (medical) case for a number of eighteenth-century women poets who "to some degree, suffered from hysteria and wrote about it."⁵⁹⁹ According to Meek, the poetic and life-writing texts of these women not only showed an awareness of contemporary medical views on hysteria – the prominent eighteenth-century form of nerve-related melancholy –⁶⁰⁰ but also that these women "rejected the conventional gendering of the disease's symptoms to underscore an intellectual dimension to their afflictions – a distinction usually granted solely to men."⁶⁰¹

Meek's biographically informed readings of Carter's letters and poetry are embedded in the contemporary discourse of nervous disorders.⁶⁰² The 'evidence',

⁵⁹⁸ Until today, Carter is depicted as cheerful and free of melancholy and depression; see for example, Clarke (2005), p. 51f. Also with respect to Johnson and his regular visits of 'the black dog', as he called his bouts of depression and melancholy, Clarke acquits Carter from any evidence of melancholy or hysteria: "Talbot urged Carter to contribute a 'cheerful paper' to the *Rambler*, knowing that cheerfulness was a part of her philosophy. In this, though loyal throughout her life to her old friend and colleague, Johnson, Carter was in fact very different from him. She did not share Johnson's pessimism. [...] She had none of his terror of solitude, his bleak failures to find human consolation, his desperation and panic whenever he was without the support of company. When Johnson read Epictetus he picked out a sadistic maxim to approve: 'a man should accustom himself often to think of what is most shocking and terrible, that by such reflections he may be preserved from too ardent wishes for seeming good, and from too much dejection in real evil.' But Elizabeth Carter took a much more detached and critical perspective [...]. She commented: 'I am inclined to think that real misfortunes when they do come to pass, are not rendered at all lighter from people having tormented themselves beforehand, and damped every cheerful enjoyment of present blessings by looking forward to their loss'" (57f.).

⁵⁹⁹ Meek ("Creative Hysteria", 2011), p. 88f. In particular, Meek discusses Anne Finch, Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, and Charlotte Smith.

⁶⁰⁰ See Meek ("Creative Hysteria", 2011), p. 89, and chap. 1.2 of this study, p. 49.

⁶⁰¹ Meek ("Creative Hysteria", 2011), p. 89.

⁶⁰² With regard to Carter, whom she terms "a model of a 'studious hysteric'" (93), Meek ("Creative Hysteria", 2011) hinges her discussion on the frequent headaches from which Carter suffered throughout her life. Since headaches were considered a key symptom of the catch-all condition hysteria, Meek further deduces, "by extension," an alignment "with the mind" and thus Carter's pain "brought physical discomfort and frustration, but also feeling, thought, and vitality" (89). Commonly, biographical accounts of Carter ascribe this ailment to her rigid lifestyle and her heavy workload: "The intensity of her self-imposed early studies was often taken to explain her lifelong headaches,

however, is not as definite as Meek suggests. Extensive correspondence between Catherine Talbot and Carter shows, for instance, that Talbot's own troubled state of mind was much more pronounced, whereas Carter's occasional complaints of "splenetic fits" remained rare and revealed relatively little reason for a serious medical diagnosis.⁶⁰³ In tune with her biographical approach, Meek believes a combined reading of Carter's famous "Ode to Melancholy" and her letters to be inevitable:

Carter depicts a condition of privilege whose primary symptom is philosophic and spiritual contemplation. Certainly, in the context of Carter's letters, where she depicts constant struggles with headaches, fatigues, and intellectual obstacles of spleen, the notion of the disembodied poetic persona seems absurd, and the poem must be read somewhat ironically. Interestingly, though, viewing the letters alongside the poem reveals a woman capable of overcoming hysteria through representation. [...] Carter represents a disembodied, intellectual, *and* hysteric woman, and in this sense, she diverges in key ways from the men of feeling of the age.⁶⁰⁴

Yet, reading the poem from a poetic-melancholic perspective, it reveals Carter's contribution to this literary tradition without the need to recur to the poet's biography. "Ode To Melancholy" was an early and immensely popular and representative example⁶⁰⁵ of Carter's comparably large corpus of melancholy poems, to which can be added also the famous "Ode to Wisdom", as well as a number of friendship poems, e.g. "To Miss Hall" (1748), "To Miss Lynch" (1748) and "To Mrs. Vesey" (1766).⁶⁰⁶

The "Ode" was first published in 1739 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and reprinted in *Poem on Several Occasions* (1766). As with Carter's other writings, her "Ode" reflects her remarkable education and learnedness, as well as helping to construct her life as a woman of letters.⁶⁰⁷ The poem demonstrates Carter's wide reading in classic literature,⁶⁰⁸ which might explain her preference here for the Horatian Ode over the contemporary literary taste for Marvell's, Cowley's, and Dryden's use of other ode forms. Carter's "Ode to Melancholy" is comprised of 13 identical stanzas of six verses in a regular rhyme scheme. Consisting of two couplets, the second framed by an

nearsightedness, and addiction to snuff (to keep her awake)" (Lonsdale (1989), p. 165). In some accounts green tea and coffee are added to the list of Carter's stimulants (see Keith (1991), p. 55).

⁶⁰³ For instance, see Talbot's letter from 10 May 1744 (see Pennington (1809), vol. I, p. 52f.) and Carter's response from 14 May 1744 (56f.).

⁶⁰⁴ Meek ("Creative Hysteria", 2011), p. 94f (my emphasis).

⁶⁰⁵ Reed (1924) regards Carter's "Ode to Melancholy" representative of the "average taste" of the early eighteenth-century reader (217).

⁶⁰⁶ For a selection of Carter's melancholy poetry, see Sena (1970), p. 25. In the context of mid-century literary melancholy and sensibility, Carter's brief essay "Reflections suggested by the Sight of Ruins" (1767), in which the speaker's musings upon life are triggered by the melancholic sight of a ruin.

⁶⁰⁷ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 283.

⁶⁰⁸ See Keith (1991), p. 54.

embracing rhyme (e.g. stanza one: aabccb), and buttressed by matching metrical manifestations – iambic pentameter in the opening couplet, iambic tetrameter in the embracing verses and, again, iambic pentameter in the embraced couplet – the individual stanzas appear as semantically, as well as prosodically, closed units. The poetic form and the poem's title serve as a paratextual strategy to bestow a rather personal, reflective, and contemplative mode on the poem, which is amplified by the epigram from Sophocles which Carter prefixes to the poem:

Alas! shades of night, my day,
O darkness, light to me,
Take, oh take me away to dwell with you,
Take me away. -----⁶⁰⁹

Sophocles' contemplative lines are enforced by the paradoxical incantation of the night as speaker's "day", the "darkness" as speaker's light, and the ardent plea to be taken away to death by the night. The motifs of night, death, and enlightenment (also in the sentimental and paradoxical way they appear here) do not only pre-empt Carter's own poem, but further demonstrate her (literary) knowledge of inscribing herself and revelling in the discourse of melancholy writing, using some of the most prominent marker and images. As Sena sums up: "Elizabeth Carter makes full use of the literary conventions customarily associated with melancholic poems: yew trees, hooting owls, tolling bells, graveyards, and scenes of decay and destruction permeate her poetry."⁶¹⁰

Carter seems to slide neatly into the tradition of melancholy poetry with its Miltonic aura, as her poems relate to contemporary melancholy poetry from James Thompson's *The Seasons* (1726-1730) and Thomas Parnell's "A Night-Piece on Death" (1721), thus revealing the influences of sensibility and the burgeoning graveyard poetry.

Firmly rooted in this literary tradition, Carter's persona commences with the essential and emphatic apostrophe and invocation of melancholy ("COME Melancholy!", l. 1), inviting "the silent Pow'r" (l. 1) as "Companion of my lonely Hour" (l. 2). In addition to the apostrophe's inherent notion of empowerment,⁶¹¹ "silent" emphasises the speaker's poetic power. Since she does not expect any kind of answer from her abstract interlocutor, she fashions herself as (poetic) agent in power over her contemplative thoughts, as well as the poem itself. Melancholy, the

⁶⁰⁹ Sophocles, *Ajax*, ll. 394ff. Translated by Montagu Pennington, qtd. in Carter (1999), p. 445.

⁶¹⁰ Sena (1971), p. 117. Keith (1991) subscribes to this judgment (see 56).

⁶¹¹ For Culler's discussion of apostrophe, see chap. 3.2, p. 127.

paradoxical “sweet-sad Guest” (l. 5) associated with rationality (“sober Thought”, l. 4) and calmness (“soothing Charms”, l. 5), is finally and urgently invited by the speaker to infest or “Indulge my pensive Mind” (l. 6).

But not only reason and contemplation accompany melancholy, but also a constancy not to be found in “The Tides of Mirth, that ebb and flow, / In Folly’s noisy Stream” (ll. 8-9). As in the poems of Carter’s famous melancholic predecessors, e.g. Burton, Milton, and Margaret Cavendish, melancholy’s alliterative counterpart mirth – here pictured as the tides “that ebb and flow” – serves as a (negative) contrast to melancholy. The speaker singles herself out from the folly of society, the crowd or collective. She individualises herself as distinct from the rest of society and demonstrates her social disengagement. Structurally, the text renders this separation from society through the prominent position of the personal pronoun at the beginning of the verse and the hyperbaton between subject and verb: “I from the busy Croud retire, / To court the Objects that inspire / Thy philosophic Dream” (ll. 10-12). Retirement and solitude appear essential to reach a state of courting melancholy, which, in return, inspires the “philosophic Dream.” This alludes both to the nocturnal setting, when the speaker awakes to her melancholic parallel world, as well as to the potentially fleeting and imagined nature of that world.

In the third stanza, the scenery through which the solitary speaker roams (see l. 15) changes into a graveyard, “yon dark Grove of mournful Yews” (l. 13). Unlike the usage of the graveyard as a topographical reality in Gray’s later “Elegy”, the setting in Carter’s “Ode” does not prompt the speaker’s rather gloomy meditations. Rather, the graveyard provides a theatrical setting and imaginary space in which the speaker indulges finding her true existence among the dead: “Here, cold to Pleasure’s tempting Forms, / Consociate with my Sister-worms, / And mingle with the Dead” (ll. 16-18).⁶¹²

“Ye Midnight Horrors! Awful Gloom!” (l. 19) – despite the strong, almost sensationalist opening verse of stanza four, the speaker has positive associations with the nightly graveyard and the society of the dead. Far from being intimidated, she anticipates her “future peaceful Bed” (l. 21) in “Ye silent Regions of the Tomb” (l. 20). Further distancing herself from the outburst at the beginning of the stanza and

⁶¹² As Pennington has pointed out, “the ‘sister-worms’ probably refers to Job 17:14: ‘I have said to corruption, Thou *art* my father: to the worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my sister’ (*King James Bible*)” (*Bluestocking Feminism*, vol. II (1999), p. 445). “[S]ister-worms”, however, is not the only allusion to Job. Motives like the inversion of day and night, the significance of the external senses (esp. seeing), as well as the feeling of despair and melancholy are also important issues negotiated in Job.

similar to the stanza before, the persona rests assured: "Here shall my weary Eyes be clos'd, / And ev'ry Sorrow lie repos'd / In Death's refreshing Shade" (22-24). Both stanza three and four mostly work through contrasts in order to create moments of shock or surprise, e.g. the positive connotation of the gloomy graveyard scenario in general and of the mingling with the dead. The nightly horrors are associated with the repose of the speaker's future grave and seem to be merely disturbing for the reader, but not for the speaker herself. Even death, despite its inherent gloominess, becomes "refreshing" and signifies the beginning of something new. The repetition of "Here" in line 16 and 22 does not refer to a spatial marker, but rather to a place within the speaker's melancholic imagination.

Conjuring up more spectres ("Ye pale Inhabitants of Night" (l. 25)) in her still wandering imagination ("my intellectual Sight", l. 26), the speaker's meditation shifts from death to the theme of trivial life. The trivialisation becomes emphatic by the vocative "O tell", by which the speaker invites the spectres of the night to confirm "how trifling now appears / The Train of idle Hopes and Fears" (ll. 28-29), which mocks life at the moment of greatest enlightenment: when facing death. This is also the ultimate moment of melancholy, since the speaker becomes aware of the smallness and vanity of life in general, and of her own life in particular.

Within this context of vain and trivial life, the speaker deprecates the sensations of the (external) senses as "transient Forms like Shadows" and "Frail Offsprings of the magic Glass" (l. 34, 35). Deceived and deluded by "dazzling Colours, falsely bright, / Attract the gazing vulgar Sight / With superficial State", our senses, and as Sena points out, by extension, our intellect,⁶¹³ cannot provide the same intellectual depth and enlightenment as the dark melancholic imagination. Or differently: things we perceive – whether by our senses or our intellect – in the light of day blind us, while the real intellectual and spiritual enlightenment takes place in the dark of the night, death, and melancholy. In stanzas six and seven, the emphasis on the act of seeing, which embodies the delusion of the senses and the mind, is resolved in the last three lines of stanza seven by one of the most important paradigms of eighteenth-century thinking: reason and the sciences – "Thro' Reasons clearer Optics view'd / How stript of all it's Pomp, how rude / Appears the painted Cheat" (40-43).

Having unmasked the delusions of the individual, it is society and its allegorical vices "wild Ambition", "ill-got Wealth's superfluous Store", and "Pleasure" (l. 43, 44,

⁶¹³ See Sena (1971), p. 117.

and 46) that the speaker challenges by rhetorically asking whether they can “The Dread of Death controul?” (l. 45). And even more importantly, can they “Avert, or sooth the dire Alarm / That shake the parting Soul?” (ll. 47-48). As if providing the answer for these fundamental questions, the persona emphatically ejects “Religion!” (l. 49) and hence indicates that the solution to the fears of death, as well as to the secular vices of ambition, wealth, and pleasure is to be found in God. Only through religion, the speaker argues, are the senses taught to realise “the solemn Truth” (l. 53) in the sight of the skeletons as *memento mori* (“The awful Relics”, l. 54).

By apostrophising religion in stanza nine, the persona does not create a counterweight to melancholy (and reason). Unlike Finch’s paradigmatic discussion of religion as one of the major causes of melancholy,⁶¹⁴ religion here can be read as complementary to melancholy, or the ‘natural’ consequence of the speaker’s melancholic meditation on life and death up to this point. Once enlightened by the darkness, religion, like the sun, disperses the “penetrating Beams” and lifts “The Mist of Error” (l. 56). Remaining within the image of the sun, religion “warm[s]” “the trembling Heart” and even transforms death, “The pale terrific King” (l. 60) into an “Angel Form” (l. 59).

Stanza eleven further elaborates the Protestant belief in “Mercy” (l. 65) and “Repentance” (l. 62) from a life in “Guilt” and “sad Despair” (l. 61) as a way of overcoming these feelings. In the last two stanzas, the persona enhances her religious sensitivity through the concept of the sublime and creates the devotional and concomitantly elevated panorama of the afterlife one would expect in this heightened intellectual-melancholic state. Overcoming the “universal Debt” (l. 72) and “arm’d by Faith” (l. 71), the soul “aspires” and “elates” (l. 67, 69). Finally, the speaker envisions death euphemistically as a soft transition – linguistically underlined by the frequent s-sounds, especially in the first three lines and the last word of the stanza – to a sentimentalised version of the Christian afterlife characterised by peace and bliss:

In Death’s soft Slumber lull’d to Rest,
She sleeps by smiling Visions blest,
That gently whisper Peace:
‘Till the last Morn’s fair op’ning Ray
Unfolds the bright eternal Day
Of active Life and Bliss. (ll. 73-78)

⁶¹⁴ See Finch’s “Spleen”, ll. 116-126 in the Appendix, p. 275. For a comparison between Finch’s melancholy poetry and Carter’s, see Sena (1971).

Sena organises his reading of Carter's poem around Sophocles's epigram preceding the "Ode". Thus, day and night and their respective associations become his analytical principal. Summarising his idea of the repeated day-night constellations in various poems by Carter, he observes: "Day is the time of 'deceitful colours' and 'dazzling' variegation that obscure reality and confuse the obscurer. Night is the realm of the pale, sombre colours, of 'visionary shadows' and 'faint reflections' that allow one to pierce illusions and perceive essences."⁶¹⁵ Although I generally agree with Sena's reading of the day/night dichotomy, the seminal role of religion in this poem, which is crucial for Carter's text, goes unnoticed. Only through the light of religion, triggered by melancholy, can fundamental fears of death be dispersed, even if in the process our melancholic awareness of human mortality is heightened. Concurrently, the light, which makes us realise our own death, also promises eternal life. Hence, it is only in the complementary dichotomy of night and day, of darkness and light, and of melancholy and religion that melancholic contemplation leads us to our ultimate point of self-recognition – and beyond.

Carter's "Ode to Melancholy" is one of the few poems that has been highlighted as an example of eighteenth-century melancholy writing by women,⁶¹⁶ and which corresponds to the general notion of melancholy poetry of self-indulgence and apotheosis – a poetic gesture unusual for women poets at that time.⁶¹⁷ According to Backscheider, Carter's "Ode" "is very much in harmony with the hundreds of mid-century poems that court melancholy and find it to inspire important reflections."⁶¹⁸ Sena, on whose definition Backscheider draws,⁶¹⁹ states in respect to Carter's melancholy poems: "she generally does not employ them solely to achieve hedonistic indulgence in emotional gloom, but for their effect to one's religious sensibility."⁶²⁰ Unlike Backscheider, Sena stresses the productive connection between melancholy and religion. Both critics do not deny Carter a kind of "hedonistic" indulgence in

⁶¹⁵ Sena (1971), p. 117.

⁶¹⁶ See Backscheider (2008), p. 242.

⁶¹⁷ See Backscheider (2008), p. 248.

⁶¹⁸ Backscheider (2008), p. 253.

⁶¹⁹ "Melancholy became for these poets [i.e. male poets like Pope, Tickell, Young, Parnell, Thomson, Blair, Thomas Wharton, Shenstone, Broome, Hammond, Collins, Gray, Watts and Whitehead; S.B.] a source of poetic inspiration, giving rise to poems ranging from a religious consideration of the mutability and impermanence of all earthly things, to a hedonistic delight in the pleasures of pathos and sadness" (Sena (1971), p. 116).

⁶²⁰ Sena (1971), 117; my emphasis.

melancholy, and thus place “Ode To Melancholy” within the male tradition of melancholy writings.

Backscheider has a point when she calls the poem a rare example of the sentimentalised transformation of the pseudo-Aristotelian notion of melancholy. The poem clearly corresponds to the generic definition of melancholy poetry so strongly shaped by Gray, and clearly revels in this tradition. However, one of the reasons why Backscheider does not consider other poems written by Augustan women writers melancholic is her general evaluation of the genre. Yet, to restrict the catalogue of characteristics to feelings of self-indulgence and hedonism is far too narrow and must be broadened.⁶²¹ Backscheider’s approach neither includes the multiplicity of forms of “eighteenth-century melancholies,”⁶²² nor does it reflect the basic poles of the melancholy continuum – melancholy as inspiration and, at the same time, the paralysis of inspiration by melancholy.⁶²³ If we want to remap women’s poetic contributions to this literary tradition, we have to take into account different forms of melancholies and read poetic texts against the hermeneutic expectations prepared by Milton’s and Gray’s poems.

A further differentiation would also address the question of literary quality: if a melancholy poem is one which only needs to relate to the literary manner of Milton and Gray, the question of literary quality will be by and large ignored. As with Carter’s “Ode”, the critical focus so far centres on conventional melancholic *topoi* and the capturing of a specific contemplative, melancholic mood. A more differentiated approach promises to include poems that do not necessarily rely on such topical elements. Instead, it may include poems as melancholic that negotiate other literary strategies, such as the resisting and revelling in melancholy (that we have already seen) or the negotiation of the experience of melancholic mourning (as will be shown in chapter four).

Carter’s “Ode to Melancholy” clearly demonstrates its author’s extraordinary learnedness, and, more importantly, it shows that Carter was able to play with the literary conventions of melancholy writing. The “Ode” not only relates to the

⁶²¹ If we applied Backscheider’s notion rigorously as the stand-alone definition of melancholy poetry then numerous male poets, maybe most prominently Pope, would not fit within the category at all, since his poems of melancholy, such as “Eloise and Abelard” and the fourth canton of *The Rape of the Lock* clearly show anti-melancholic traits.

⁶²² John F. Sena, *‘The English Malady’: The Idea of Melancholy from 1700-1760*. Unpublished PhD-Thesis, University of Princeton, 1967, p. 64, qtd. in Lawlor (2011), p. 27.

⁶²³ Also see Baker (2011), p. 93.

conventions of the literary melancholy tradition, but is also indicative of a formal-experiential style of melancholy writing. In her poem, Carter manages to create a socially acceptable, 'modest' female persona carrying the marks of the melancholic poet-philosopher. This speaker, whose meditations on life and death are instigated by the experience of melancholy, succeeds in going 'beyond' the apparent 'ultimate point' of melancholy, after which thoughts can only be circular. By closely associating melancholy with religion, Carter managed to give another, possibly more moderate quality to melancholic writing than previous writers had done. In doing so, she established a novel imaginative sphere into which melancholy texts by women writers could develop.

"Th' intoxicated poet's bane": Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough's "Written to a near Neighbour in a tempestuous Night 1748" (1755)

The literary life of the poet and letter writer Henrietta Knight (1699-1756) was greatly influenced by the break-up of her marriage with Robert Knight, later Baron Luxborough (1745) and her subsequent friendship with the poet William Shenstone. The legal separation confined her to a rural country estate at Barrells, Ullenhall, and forbade any further contact with her two children next to severe financial and social restrictions.

At Barrells, Henrietta Knight became part of the so-called 'Warwickshire coterie', a literary circle in which Asteria, so Knight's *nom de plume*, formed relations with the clergyman and poet Richard Jago, the poet William Somervile and, most importantly, to the writer William Shenstone, with whom Knight corresponded from 1742-1755.⁶²⁴ Referring to the imbalanced relationship between Shenstone and "the troubled"⁶²⁵ Henrietta Knight, Roger Lonsdale pointedly remarks that "Shenstone increasingly used her as an audience, and was in turn responsible for the appearance of four of her poems in Dodsley's *Collection* in 1755, disconcerting her by arranging this without her permission."⁶²⁶ Just before her death in 1756, the friendship between Shenstone and Henrietta Knight came to an end. The four poems "The Bullfinch in Town", "Song. Written in Winter 1745", "Written to a near Neighbour in a

⁶²⁴ A first selection of Knight's and Shenstone's correspondence was published by James Dodsley as *Letters to William Shenstone* (1775). More of their correspondence was published as *Select Letters between the late Duchess of Somerset, Lady Luxborough, William Shenstone and others* in 1778.

⁶²⁵ In the *DNB*-entry on William Shenstone, Paul Baines refers to Henrietta Knight as "Lady Luxborough, the troubled sister of Viscount Bolingbroke" (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25321?docPos=1>; last visit 10 Oct. 2012).

⁶²⁶ Lonsdale (1989), p. 224.

tempestuous Night 1748", and "Written at a Ferme Ornee near Birmingham; August 7th, 1749" that appeared in Robert Dodsley's seminal *Collection of poems by several hands* (1748) remained her only publications during her lifetime.

A few snippets from the extensive correspondence between Knight and Shenstone suffice to provide an impression of Knight's personal experience of melancholy.⁶²⁷ The correspondences between Knight, Shenstone and Lady Hertford speak the language of melancholy and sensibility, and demonstrate benevolence and sympathy for each other's situations. On May 27th, 1751, for example, Knight writes to William Shenstone:

The stagnation of the commodity *Scandal*, I am *not* sorry for; but *that* of the currency of wit, humour, or indeed the mere occurrences of the day, we suffer by: for when *they* circulate, *we* give less way to melancholy thoughts, which are too apt prey upon the minds of us recluse people, and do us as much hurt in one sense, as the people of the world's having no thought at all does them in another. – But I just now perceive that I let my own thoughts ramble without bounds, and that my pen obeys them to your misfortune.⁶²⁸

The experience of isolation and disengagement from the world and its associations with unsociability and melancholy are clearly on display in this short extract. Another on-going motive is the "friend", an alter ego who empathises with the letter writer and mirrors her own melancholy.⁶²⁹ In the letter from January 20th 1752, Knight declares to Shenstone: "Your grief for your Brother I feel in its full force, and am persuaded you feel the like as to mine: but as our losses are irrecoverable, we ought, I believe, not only to submit, but to endeavour to shake off the melancholy ideas they suggest. – I preach what I do not well practice; and will prescribe what I do not well execute – Come into company [.]"⁶³⁰ The letters between Knight, Shenstone and Lady Hertford not only prove that the emotional experience of melancholy was an permanent and prominent topic, but also that Knight herself was perceived as deeply melancholic by her correspondents.⁶³¹

Knight's poem "Written to a near Neighbour in a tempestuous Night 1748", first published in 1755 in the extended edition of Dodsley's renowned anthology,⁶³²

⁶²⁷ In both of Knight's correspondences – with Shenstone as well as Knight's close friend Frances Seymour, *née* Thynne (also see, p. 44) – melancholy, spleen, and other feelings of despondency play an important role. Due to Knight's label as a so-called minor poet, her writings and her life have not been thoroughly researched yet, and so present opportunity for more research – also in terms of melancholy.

⁶²⁸ Knight (1775), p. 267.

⁶²⁹ For the friend as an 'alter ego', see chap. 4.2, FN 821.

⁶³⁰ Knight (1775), p. 295.

⁶³¹ A critical analysis of the correspondence of Knight, Shenstone and Lady Hertford needs yet to be done.

⁶³² For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 285.

negotiates melancholy clearly with respect to the act of writing and its potential dangers, as well as the ambivalent existence of a (woman) poet. The extempore poem presents itself as a direct reply to “a near Neighbour[‘s]” apparent request to continue to write – a wish the poet-speaker seems willing to comply with. The force of the alleged neighbour’s wish, possibly a member of Knight’s coterie,⁶³³ is vividly expressed by the poet-speaker in the beginning lines of the poem – “YOU bid my Muse not cease to sing, / You bid my ink not cease to flow” (ll. 1-2) – and stressed by the anaphora, as well as by the parallelism of the verses. Being promised eternal spring and a carefree life if only she continues to write poetry (see ll. 4-5), the speaker is aware of the implausibility of these lures and wittily states: “When you such miracles can prove, / I’ll sing of friendship and of love” (ll. 5-6). Each of the four stanzas of the poem presents a closed formal and semantic unit. Consisting of six verses in iambic pentameter and a cross rhyme scheme of the first four lines and an additional closing couplet, the stanzas describe the increasing ‘melancholization’ of the poet-speaker during the act of writing. While the first stanza is still considerably jocund and witty, it is also sceptical about the alleged cheering effects of poetry.

Exposed to solitude and solicitude, the speaker experiences “by storm opprest” (l. 7) the opposites of what the neighbour promises, namely spring and no “boisterous winds” (l. 5). The “storm”-situation relates to both the actual weather condition (see title of the poem), as well as the emotional state of the poem’s speaker and thus implies an analogy between the outer and inner situation of the poetic self. While the stormy night emphasises the geographical isolation of the speaker, the inner disengagement and solitude becomes apparent through the stressed “alone” (framed by two commas) in verse seven, and through the anaphora in verses nine and ten in which “No chearful voice” and “No jocund pipe” drown out the howls of life’s “storms” (l. 7). “Untrain’d beside in verse-like art, / How shall my pen express my Heart?” (ll. 11-12), the stanza closes with the speaker withdrawing to her last resort or point of rescue: the writing of poetry. This demonstrates the underlying paradox within the majority of literary melancholy writings, as have been shown in Wharton’s “To Melpomene Against Complaint”: the literary expression of the unspeakable. In other words, melancholy texts continuously express what they claim cannot be expressed. On this basis, melancholy texts as linguistic artifacts emerge from feelings and thoughts claimed to be beyond language.

⁶³³ See Backscheider (2008), p. 205.

This paradoxical tension grows as the poem progresses, until the simultaneous state of paralysis is announced in stanza three. Here, the poet-speaker ventures an emphatic, however futile, invocation of the muses and Apollo, who seemingly refuse to help – while the poem itself constantly contradicts the speaker's statements:

In vain I call th' harmonious Nine,
In vain implore Apollo's aid;
Obdurate, they refuse a line,
While spleen and care my rest invade. (ll. 13-16)

Calling upon Apollo as the god of poetry and medicine unifies the speaker's call for poetic inspiration, as well as for assistance against her spleen. The dreaded and yet fashionable eighteenth-century type of melancholy is presented by the speaker in its close relation to poetic inspiration and the poet's unaided position between spleen's two poles: inspiration and paralysis. The use of the war metaphor "invade" in verse 16, stresses the pathological aspects of melancholy.⁶³⁴ The speaker complains with medical expertise about insomnia, one of the major symptoms of spleen, and melancholy – and "revels in" melancholy in its second, medical connotation. She turns for help to Morpheus, the god of dreams and sleep. Tellingly, the poet-speaker does not ask for sleep and rest or, more precisely, for a quiet mind to find some rest, but instead asks for dreams, and thus for further poetic inspiration: "Say, shall we Morpheus next implore, / And try if dreams befriend us more?" (ll. 17-18).

This is a crucial moment in the poem: at the end of stanza three the poet-speaker, still implicitly addressing the unknown neighbour (and the reader), complains of her incapability to write due to a lack of poetic inspiration and due to her melancholy. This seems to derive from her (physical) isolation, daily sorrows and above all, from her anxiety at not being able to write. Since the speaker regards the act of writing as essential to her being (see l. 11), not writing goes hand in hand with losing her (poet-melancholic) self. The resulting insomnia is merely the final (physical) proof of the speaker's melancholy mind.

It is important to note that the poet-speaker's poetic inspiration, which she invokes from traditional sources such as the muses, actually emerges from her melancholy, although she dismisses the latter as the creative source. This becomes evident at the beginning of the fourth and final stanza when her melancholic, racing mind and her writing finally seem to come to rest as granted by Morpheus: "Wisely at least he'll stop my pen, / And with his poppies crown my brown" (ll. 19-20). Stopping the

⁶³⁴ For a similarly martial vocabulary, see the analysis of Finch's "Ardelia to Melancholy, chap. 3.2, p. 123.

melancholic's symptomatic swirl of thoughts leads the poet-speaker to the insight of the closing statement in which she re-evaluates the neighbour's initial request to continue writing poetry more critically:

Better by far in lonesome den
To sleep unheard of – than to glow
With treach'rous wildfire of the brain,
Th' intoxicated poet's bane. (ll. 21-24)

Preferring to live in anonymity with a quiet mind, the persona finally dismisses melancholy as a source of poetic inspiration, or, at the very least she dismisses it as a companion of the poetic process, defining it as an uncontrollable "treach'rous wildfire of the brain" (l. 23), which she identifies as specific for poets – "Th' intoxicated poet's bane" (l. 24). This makes her dismissal, however, highly ambivalent. Highlighted by the caesura in verse 22, the metrical emphasis of the verse lies on "glow", which offers two possible readings of the closing couplet. On the one hand, it reads as an appeal to a normative feminine modesty and the relinquishing of poetic fame and resistance to melancholy, especially when accompanied by malignant aspects. Here, "glow" is set against allegedly inappropriate poetic aspirations. On the other hand, the verb can also be read as a stark contrast to the following two lines, emphasising the desirable exceptionality of melancholy as "the poet's bane" despite its negative side-effects. In this case, "glow" idealises and revels in melancholy in its pseudo-Aristotelian sense.

Both resisting and yet revelling in melancholy, Knight's poem "Written to a near Neighbour in tempestuous Night 1748" is a good example of the diversity and heterogeneity of mid-eighteenth-century female literary melancholy texts. As much as the poem draws upon topical aspects, as well as on medical lay-knowledge, the experience of melancholy from a poet-speaker's perspective with its inherent ambivalence and oscillation between poetic inspiration and paralysis represents the ambivalent position of the woman poet towards this poetic subject. The poem remains vague as to how the speaker finally evaluates melancholy: as a poetic-pathological phenomenon – "Th' intoxicated poet's bane" (l. 24) – and the price the poet appears to have to pay, or as poetic inspiration, whose glory and fame the poet-speaker modestly refuses.

“From Pictur’d Regions and Imagin’d Worlds”: Mary Leapor’s “The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness” (1748)⁶³⁵

Mary Leapor is exceptional in the line of writers discussed so far. More than any other woman poet mentioned, Mary Leapor is an improbable poet in general, and an even less probable melancholy poet. Born in 1722, Mary Leapor spent her short life working as a kitchen maid and keeping her father’s house. She most likely received a limited education, attending the village school in Brackley, rural Northamptonshire. According to her social position, Leapor entered service when young and was employed by at least two families, Richard and Susanna Blencowe Jennens, i.e. “Parthenissa” in Leapor’s poems, as well as the Chauncy family.⁶³⁶ Whether Leapor had access to any libraries at Weston Hall or Edgecote House, which most likely served as a model for Leapor’s most famous poem “Crumble Hall”, remains unclear. By the time of her death in November 1746 at the age of 24, she had accumulated 16 or 17 volumes of books, including works of Pope, Dryden’s *Fables*, some volumes of plays and a bulk of poems and plays written by herself.⁶³⁷ During her short life, none of her numerous poems went into print and her literary fame and reputation beyond the boundaries of Brackley was entirely posthumous.

The very fact that Leapor’s poems finally underwent two publications is due to a local gentlewoman Leapor had met sometime around August 1745, 14 months before her premature death. Bridget Freemantle, i.e. “Artemisia” in Leapor’s verses and her future patron, is a pivotal figure in the publication history of Leapor’s poetry. A woman of modest independent means, she managed within a relatively short period of time to obtain a subscription for a volume of Leapor’s poetry and to position a social and literary outsider in the flourishing literary market.⁶³⁸

Poems Upon Several Occasions was published in 1748 and raised over 500 subscribers, as well as the interest of one of the most important figures of the contemporary literary scene: Samuel Richardson.⁶³⁹ In 1751, Richardson edited the second volume of Leapor’s poems with a markedly smaller number of subscribers who mainly

⁶³⁵ This chapter was published in a similar form as “‘To pictur’d Regions and imagin’d Worlds’: Female Melancholic Writings and the Poems of Mary Leapor” in *The Literature of Melancholia. Early Modern to Postmodern*, ed. Martin Middeke and Christina Wald (2011).

⁶³⁶ For further information about Leapor’s biography, education, and employments, see Greene (1993), pp. 1-37; Betty Rizzo (1991), pp. 313-43; and Stuart Gillespie’s *DNB*-entry “Mary Leapor”, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16246>; last visit 3 June 2009.

⁶³⁷ Rizzo (1991), p. 315.

⁶³⁸ See Rizzo (1990), pp. 244-254.

⁶³⁹ Greene and Messenger (2003), p. xxvi.

belonged to his coterie.⁶⁴⁰ For a short time, Leapor was heavily promoted not just by Samuel Richardson and his circle, but also by John Duncombe, who immortalised Mary Leapor in *The Feminiad* (1754).⁶⁴¹ Leapor's literary success was initiated by a letter written by her patron Bridget Freemantle, which preceded the second volume of her poems (1751). This letter, still today one of the key documents for Leapor criticism, does not merely reveal important biographical details, but also bears witness to the posthumous construction of Mary Leapor and her poetic persona Mira (an anagram of Leapor's first name Mary). Leapor/Mira is fashioned as both the "cheerful and unpretending poor," as Valerie Rumbold has pointed out, and as a so-called "natural" or "original genius" – the key to her literary success.⁶⁴²

Probably addressed to John Duncombe, Freemantle's letter contains several mini-narratives by Leapor's father, neighbours, and former employers. The underlying narrative of the letter tells the story of Freemantle's acquaintance and evolving friendship with Mary Leapor (the "young Genius"⁶⁴³) and the emerging idea of compiling Leapor's poems for subscription. Her own curiosity about a poet "that had so little Advantage (or rather none at all) either from Books or Conversation,"⁶⁴⁴ draws attention both to Leapor's (apparent) lack of education, as well as the astonishing accomplishment of her verses. In the course of the letter Freemantle increasingly stresses Mira's absolutely flawless character, as well as her natural

⁶⁴⁰ Greene and Messenger (2003), p. xxviii.

⁶⁴¹ Here, Duncombe's persona describes Leapor in *The Feminead* (1754) as follows: "Now in ecstatic visions let me rove, / By Cynthia's beams, thro' Brackley's glimm'rig grove; / Where still each night, by startled shepherds seen, / Young LEAPOR'S form flies shadowy o'er the [green] / Those envy'd honours Nature lov'd to pay / The bryar-bound turf, where erst her Shakespear lay, / Now on her darling Mira she bestows; / There o'er the hallow'd ground she fondly strows / The choicest fragrance of the breathing Spring, / And birds each year her fav'rite linnet sing. / Let cloister'd pendants in an endless round / Tread the dull mazes of scholastic ground; / Brackley unenvying views the glitt'ring train; / Of learning gaudy trappings idly vain; / For, spite of all that vaunted learning's aid; / Their fame is rival'd by her rural maid" (ll. 214–28). In a footnote to this poem, Duncombe praises Mary Leapor who "has lately convinced the world of the force of unassisted nature, by imitating and (perchance) equalling some of our most approved authors by the strength of her own parts, the vivacity of her genius, and a perpetual pursuit after knowledge" (20).

⁶⁴² Rumbold (2003), p. 90. Leapor's literary fame was only short-lived: towards the end of the eighteenth century her poems were slowly forgotten and after a period of almost total oblivion were rediscovered in the 1980s only. Since then both the poet and her texts have found an increasing echo in literary criticism, especially the poems of Volume II (1751) which have created an ongoing debate surrounding Leapor's potential class and gender subversion. Besides more general introductions to Mary Leapor, for example in Backscheider (2008), it is foremost the class-aspect which Leapor-scholars are concerned with, for example William J. Christmas (2001), and Donna Landry (1990). For the question of literary influence of the works by Pope and Swift on Mary Leapor, see Caryn Chaden (1996), and Margaret A. Doody (1998). For Mary Leapor's position within feminist criticism, see Susan Goulding (2002), Kate Lilley (1999), and Laura Mandell (1996).

⁶⁴³ Leapor (2003), p. xxxv.

⁶⁴⁴ Leapor (2003), p. xxxv.

inclination to poetry and her constant interest in reading and writing, both of which helped to further shape the idea of Mary Leapor as a natural genius.

The eighteenth century witnessed a great number of alleged original geniuses or natural poets, e.g. the thresher Stephen Duck, the Irish bricklayer Henry Jones, and Ann Yearsley, the Bristol Milkwoman, to name some of the most famous. The concept derived from Addison's differentiation of two kinds of geniuses in *The Spectator* 160 (3 Sept. 1711). Addison differentiated between those great natural geniuses that were unspoilt by the rules of art and literary tradition and therefore free from any need of education, and those geniuses that subjected their natural talents to the rules and corrections of art.⁶⁴⁵ In *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767), William Duff states:

The truth is, a Poet of original Genius has very little occasion for the weak aid of Literature: he is self-taught. He comes into the world as it were completely accomplished. Nature supplies the materials of his compositions; his senses are the under-workmen, while Imagination, like a masterly architect, superintends and directs the whole. [...] It may be easily conceived, therefore, that an original Poetic Genius, possessing such innate treasure [...] has no use for that which is derived from books, since he may be encumbered, but cannot be enriched by it;⁶⁴⁶

The aphorism "poeta nascitur, non fit" was not only an extremely popular and promising credo in Leapor's time, it was actually applied to Mary Leapor.⁶⁴⁷ However, as both Betty Rizzo and Richard Greene have convincingly argued, to call Mary Leapor a natural poet was, as Richard Greene writes, "a mistake".⁶⁴⁸ Leapor was well aware of her lack of education and was anxious and eager to "catch up, make up for lost time, follow Pope and learn to write like him. She was overwhelmed with an anxiety, not the anxiety of influence but the anxiety *for* influence", as Rizzo claimed.⁶⁴⁹ Freemantle emphasises the "Quickness of her Genius" and the natural flow of Leapor's imagination as "her Thoughts seeming to flow as fast as she could put them upon Paper; and I am persuaded, that many beautiful ones have been lost for want of Leisure to write them".⁶⁵⁰ Leapor's father also appears to support the idea of his daughter's natural inclination and informs Freemantle that

⁶⁴⁵ For the theories of the eighteenth-century concept of the natural genius, see for example James Osborn (1966), William Jackson Bate (1971), and René Wellek (1955).

⁶⁴⁶ Duff (1767), p. 281f.

⁶⁴⁷ Leapor (2003), p. xli.

⁶⁴⁸ Greene (1993), p. 158; also see Rizzo (1991), p. 336.

⁶⁴⁹ Rizzo (1991), p. 332.

⁶⁵⁰ Leapor (2003), p. xxxvii and xxxvi.

she [i.e. Mary Leapor] was always fond of reading every thing that came in her way, as soon as she was capable of it; and that when she had learnt to write tolerably, [...], she would often be scribbling, and sometimes in Rhymes; which her Mother was at first pleas'd with: But finding this Humour increase upon as she grew up, [...], she endeavour'd to break her of it; and that he likewise, having no Taste for Poetry, and not imagining it could ever be any Advantage to her, join'd in the same Design: But finding it impossible to alter her natural Inclination, he had of late desisted, and left her more at Liberty.⁶⁵¹

Leapor's constant scribbling, however, was also observed with growing worry, since "she always spend her leisure hours in Writing and Reading, rather than in those Diversions which young People generally chuse," Freemantle was informed by Leapor's father, "insomuch that observ'd it expressed their Concern, lest the Girl should over-study herself, and be mopish. But to me she always appeared rather gay, than melancholy."⁶⁵² Two things stand out at this point: the choice of words and the reference to melancholy as such. Describing Leapor as "mopish" works as a social indicator and emphasis of Leapor's working-class background and environment, since "[t]he term melancholy was reserved for the social elite, whereas those lower down the social ladder evincing similar behaviour would be classified as 'mopish' or as 'troubled in mind', rather than melancholic."⁶⁵³ Moreover, such forthright denials of melancholy are of utter importance: By diffusing any idea of melancholy, Freemantle's construction of Leapor obliges the Shaftesburian doctrines of optimism and virtue and creates a picture of the virtuous poor, the "happy pauper,"⁶⁵⁴ who deserves being helped and thus turns a subscription to these works into an act of benevolence and charity.⁶⁵⁵

Leapor's urge to read and write has to be understood in the light of her social position. It therefore becomes imperative for Freemantle to stress Leapor's full commitment to her duties and her modest and virtuous behaviour: "Nor did I admire her Poetical Capacity only", writes Freemantle, "but the more I was acquainted with her, the more I saw Reason to esteem for those virtuous Principles, and that Goodness of Heart and Temper, which so visibly appeared in her."⁶⁵⁶ Freemantle paints a picture of Leapor's poetic persona Mira that combined the notion of a natural genius who did not have to spend much time with her poetry, with that of a loving and caring daughter who completely fulfilled her domestic

⁶⁵¹ Leapor (2003), pp. xxxix-xl.

⁶⁵² Leapor (2003), p. xl.

⁶⁵³ Dawson (2008), p. 40.

⁶⁵⁴ Kord (2003), p. 56.

⁶⁵⁵ See Greene (1993), p. 108.

⁶⁵⁶ Leapor (2003), p. xxxvi.

duties, and the virtues of a modest young woman (a deserving poor) who knew her place in society: “She was courteous and obliging to all, chearful, good-natured, and contended in the Station of Life in which Providence had placed her.”⁶⁵⁷

Leapor’s poems, however, also show other facets of Leapor’s poetic persona Mira, whose image is so carefully constructed by her patron. In numerous texts, e.g. “Celadon to Mira”, “An Epistle to a Lady” and “The Cruel Parent”, Mira’s voice shows explicit melancholic traits and undertones. Leapor’s most recent biographer and critic, Richard Greene, reads these poems as meditations on death and neglects their melancholic impact altogether. However, I argue that these poems identify Mary Leapor as a writer of melancholy.⁶⁵⁸ “The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness” explicitly presents Leapor’s poet-speaker Mira’s negotiation and constitution of a poetic-melancholic self and her position in the literary melancholic tradition.

The title of the poem, “The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness”, already forms a number of ties to melancholy and to literary melancholic writings.⁶⁵⁹ Not only does Leapor position her text in a literary tradition of the melancholic poems of Milton and Cavendish, she also declares her poem a topography of two temperaments. However, what she presents in this poem are not merely *topoi* in a spatial, metaphorical or allegorical sense, but also *topoi* in their most literary sense: to a great extent the text consists of (literary) commonplaces and is consequently characterised by its “literary-discursive” elements (in Bell’s sense). At first sight therefore, the text appears like an inventory of eighteenth-century melancholy assessed by an outsider – an outsider of melancholy, as well as an outsider of the tradition of melancholy literary writings.

At the beginning (ll. 1–12) of the poem, the reader finds the poet-speaker Mira in a pensive and, colloquially speaking, melancholy mood. Her emotional state, spiced with topical ingredients such as nocturnal darkness, the gleam of a candle and silence, resembles a soft, temporary melancholy – or a Miltonic pensiveness – rather than a pathological melancholic condition. Moreover, the poet-speaker displays some iconographical signs of melancholy – not unlike in Dürer’s *Melencolia I*, “musing Mira” is sitting “pensive[ly] and alone” (l. 4) – which strongly suggest her inclination to melancholy.

⁶⁵⁷ Leapor (2003), p. xli.

⁶⁵⁸ See Greene (1993), esp. chap. 5.

⁶⁵⁹ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 286.

The poem further provides the reasons for Mira's melancholy, i.e. the memories of her dead friends, and thus underlines her generally reasonable behaviour. Mira is not sad without cause – Burton's famous dictum of genuine melancholy – but sad for a reason. In this way, the text supplies a semantic grey area in which Mira demonstrates for the first time an ambiguity towards melancholy and her emotional state, thus taking up an unspecified position within and towards the discourse of melancholy in general. It is exactly this specifically adapted emotional state of ambiguity that prepares and enables Mira's further poetic constitution in this poem.

While her melancholic and nostalgic memories awake – “Forgotten Woe, that for a time had slept” (l. 8) – and sentimentally manifest themselves in heavy crying, “like a Torrent pour'd / On her faint Soul [...]” (ll. 9–10), Mira herself falls into a “soft Slumber” (l. 11). The main part of the poem, namely the topography of melancholy and mirth, is presented as a dream vision of the poet-speaker. Donna Landry has pointed out that Leapor's general reliance on the trope of the dream vision was possibly in part owed to the cultural difficulty of the poems' material.⁶⁶⁰ This explanation, however, seems to account for only a small part of the unquestionable usefulness of the dream vision. It is necessary to consider the very nature of the dream as a subconscious and, thus, uncontrollable phenomenon that allows for a socially approved withdrawal from the world and a space for permissible transgression. As Bernard Dieterle and Manfred Engel have argued, “[b]y the middle of the 18th century [...] the dream motif – still in a largely rhetorical usage – acquires a new meaning: sleep and dream are now associated with the work of the imagination and the poet's isolation from social life.”⁶⁶¹ In Leapor's poem, the dream trope creates this socially approved, imaginative space in which it actually becomes possible for Mira to negotiate and constitute a poetic-melancholic self beyond the conventional usage of melancholy imagery and *topoi*. Mira's withdrawal into dreamlike and imagined spaces within her poetic-melancholic self is emphasised by the fragmentation into a third person speaker (Mira) and a lyrical I, which occurs as soon as she falls asleep and starts dreaming. In other words: she creates an alternative version of her self, which undergoes the melancholic journey instead of the speaker.

⁶⁶⁰ See Landry (1990), p. 105.

⁶⁶¹ Dieterle and Engle (2003), p. 17.

This 'personality split' serves numerous functions.⁶⁶² Ann Messenger convincingly explains with regard to Mira's self-fragmentation:

Mira the poet falls asleep, but 'I' tells the dream vision. The "I" is more immediate than 'Mira,' and at the same time twice removed from Leapor herself, appearing as she does in 'Mira's' dream – which works well for the purpose of an allegorical [...] description of two states of mind.⁶⁶³

But this is only one way of looking at this structural device. Leapor also needs the doubling of the voices in terms of the poem's structure in order to present the two-facedness of melancholy, as I will demonstrate below. In terms of content, however, Messenger's description of the double removal from Leapor corresponds with the greater social and literary freedom within the created imaginary spaces of the dream, and hence results in the free construction of an individualised form of melancholy.

On the wings of "restless Fancy" (l. 13) the persona, or rather her "deluded Spirit" (l. 14), now travels to "pictur'd Regions and imagin'd Worlds" (l. 15) and finally arrives at "a gloomy Land, / Whose Fields had never known the chearful Sun" (ll. 16–17). In this bleak and barren wasteland, the speaker encounters a nymph named Thought, whose neglected outer appearance in a careless dress and grave features evokes the picture of allegorical melancholy, rather than that of Reason (see l. 23). Nevertheless, the fact that Thought (or Reason) signals her companionship, as well as her safe guidance "[t]o lead [Mira] safely through the dreary Gloom" (l. 28), this allegorical travel through the speaker's self demonstrates two different things: firstly, the neoclassical tenet of the superiority of reason over emotions still holds, so the speaker is not seriously at risk of (melancholic) insanity and secondly, she is subsequently imbued with a moment of rational reflection which, again, confirms her lingering sanity.

On "rough unpleasing Paths" (l. 29), Thought leads the speaker deeper and deeper into a "dusky Wood" (l. 31) of cypresses, pines, and "rushing wind" (l. 34), accompanied by the "Complaining Sounds" (l. 37) of "the Natives, (mournful as the Place) / Or sunk in real or imagin'd Woe" (ll. 35–6). These "Natives" display a wide scope of contemporary reasons: the loss of a child or of a beloved relative; the loss of wealth; and the notorious and unmerited sadness of melancholia and its various

⁶⁶² Leapor also uses this device in other poems, e.g. in "To Artemisia. Dr. King's Invitation to Bellvill: Imitated", in which Leapor's speaking persona facetiously splits into two, a first person and Mira: "Now to the Company we fall, / 'Tis Me and Mira that is all: / More wou'd you have – Dear Madam, then / Count me and Mira o'er agen" (ll. 32–5; Leapor (2003), p. 62).

⁶⁶³ Messenger (2001), p. 179.

medical offspring (for instance, the spleen as an imagined, fashionable disease)⁶⁶⁴ (see ll. 37–42).

As the speaker and her companion come closer to “the Centre of the Place” (l. 43), the situation becomes increasingly oppressive: the wailing and complaints “were heard more piercing” (l. 44), fog gathers over their heads and resembles the vapours rising from the lower abdomen to the melancholic’s head. “Pensive beyond measure” (l. 47), Mira’s pensiveness from the beginning of the poem is taken up again and is given heightened importance. The persona and Thought finally reach the palace of the “mournful Queen” (l. 52) and are introduced to the court of melancholy. Where the poem narrates the journey of Mira, the “literary-discursive” elements (in Bell’s sense) in the text gain prominence. Again and again, the poem alludes or explicitly refers to the commonly known and highly popular images and iconographical elements of melancholy, thereby creating a poetic kaleidoscope of mid-eighteenth-century melancholy *topoi*.

On their way, the poetic travellers at first pass the royal guards “pining Sickness with continual Groans” (l. 56) and “quaking Poverty with ghastly stare” (l. 58). These guards lucidly demonstrate the ways in which the class aspect of melancholy already changes towards the middle of the eighteenth century. Although George Cheyne presents the emerging middle and upper classes in his case studies as predominantly melancholy,⁶⁶⁵ the poem witnesses how melancholy seeps through to the lower social classes and emphasises the purported nexus of social position and sickness. Secondly, the guards are also proof of the virulence of religious melancholy in the mid-eighteenth century. The phrase “quaking Poverty with ghastly stare” (l. 58) turns out to be an unusual but interesting choice of words.⁶⁶⁶ Considering Sena’s often-quoted “plurality of eighteenth-century melancholies,”⁶⁶⁷ “quaking poverty” quite possibly alludes to a highly stigmatised form of religious melancholy which afflicted religious enthusiasts, such as the Quakers, who were criticised for their spiritual visions as a product of an inflamed, hence melancholic, imagination.⁶⁶⁸ Quakerism and poverty – the social critique in this instance is hard to ignore.

⁶⁶⁴ See chap. 1 of this study.

⁶⁶⁵ See also above chap. 1.3, p. 56. For a thorough discussion of eighteenth-century melancholy and the emerging middle classes in general, see Lepenies (1998).

⁶⁶⁶ Mary Leapor seems to have genuinely coined the phrase “quaking poverty” and uses it again in her drama “The Unhappy Father.”

⁶⁶⁷ See FN 622.

⁶⁶⁸ Since the Quakers often belonged to the lower social classes, this would account for Leapor’s combination of quaking and poverty. For the connection of melancholy, religious enthusiasm and the

The more they advance towards the core of melancholy, the more the allegorical figures and the setting resemble their “Empress” (l. 79). Right in the middle of the poem, the speaker (still accompanied by Thought) finally enters the royal palace. It is covered with deadly hemlock and gloomy-looking ferns, standing in a mist of “unhealthy Vapors” rising from the ground – the allusion to the pathological state of melancholy is obvious (see ll. 71–3). At last a door “of Ebony” (l. 74) leads into a “Passage hung with black” (l. 75) and the persona finds the “subterraneous Cell, / Where the sad Empress *Melancholy* reign’d” (ll. 78–9) in melancholy’s element, the earth:

The musing Matron sat upon a Throne
Of mould’ring Earth – her Footstool of the same;
And for her Canopy an aged Yew
Spread o’er her Head its venerable Arms:
Her careless Robe was of a sable Hue,
And on her Shoulders flow’d with slighted Hair:
Her lips were clos’d with an eternal Silence,
Her Arms were folded and her Head reclin’d. (ll. 80–7)⁶⁰

The description invokes the most prominent *topoi* of black melancholy. The depiction of the cell embedded in the earth most probably reminds the eighteenth-century reader of Milton’s opening verses of “L’Allegro”, extended by some iconographical elements of melancholy imagery, e.g. the dark garment and graveyard elements like the yew canopy.⁶¹

Most striking, however, is the resemblance between melancholy and dreaming Mira herself. The text itself suggests this resemblance through the mutual alliteration of “musing Mira” (l. 4) and “musing Matron” (l. 80) and the similar attributes of their inner and outer state: both are sad, pensive or musing, and walled in by darkness and emotions. At this point, the poem presents another aspect of Leapor’s approach to melancholy. The alliteration of Mira and melancholy captures the internal binary structure of melancholy: on the one hand, through the representation of the black version of Melancholy and, on the other, through Mira’s soft Miltonic pensiveness at the beginning of the poem. The poetic-melancholic self oscillates between these two sides of melancholy – not unlike Gray’s differentiation of black and white

Quakers, see Henry More, *Antidote against Atheism* (1653, 1655; esp. sect. XXV “Of Quaking and the Quakers”) and *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656). For a comprehensive discussion of religious enthusiasm, see Heyd (“Be sober and reasonable”, 1995). For a brief discussion of religious melancholy and enthusiasm, see below, chap. 4.1, FN 752.

⁶⁰ Interestingly, Mary Leapor describes her poetic persona Mira using very similar terms in her melancholic self-depiction “The Cruel Parent”.

⁶¹ Greene (1993) has pointed out that Leapor was most likely familiar with Milton’s writing (see 172), hence an intertextual reference at this point is likely.

melancholy – and hence the melancholic phenomenon is poetically and dynamically presented in its entirety and Mira herself attributed with both melancholic sides.

Yet, while mourning Mira is accompanied by Thought, Melancholy is surrounded by her gruesome (alliterative) maids Dejection and Despair (just as in the medical construction of melancholy). In the poem, they intensify the terror of Melancholy's "horrid Mansion" (l. 101).⁶⁷¹ While Despair is embodied by her gestures, "[w]ith des'prate Hand she struck her bleeding Breast" (l. 96), a hysterical form of melancholia, it is her twin sister Dejection who introduces the persona to her ultimate experience of melancholy – the climax of the poem.⁶⁷²

With "continual Fainting" (l. 90) "[a]nd her cold Bosom half forgot to heave" (l. 93), Dejection herself is on the brink of death and still leads Mira to the centre of melancholy's cell. It is here that Mira, the poetic-melancholic self and speaker of the text, is confronted with her own mortality as she encounters "in the mid'st the effigies of Death" (l. 99). In the context of early modern writing, Verena and Eckhard Lobsien have argued that it is exactly this knowledge of one's own mortality that marks the core of melancholy and of the melancholic spiritual experience that accounts for the poetic self as melancholic:

According to the early modern concept, melancholy is not an invariant temperament determined by the humours situated on the same level as the other three temperaments, but rather the extraordinary ability of the mind to reflect upon itself. The intensified human self-experience is (or rather leads to) melancholy, but only if the mind's self-knowledge does not change into a mystical and transcendental experience, but rather leads to an understanding and, consequently, to an insight of its own limitations.⁶⁷³

This encounter with her own death and the knowledge of mortality are certainly the decisive experiences in the speaker's dream travel and the constitution of her melancholic self. The persona has undergone a process of self-discovery on an epistemological and existential level and is subsequently irretrievably transformed.

⁶⁷¹ Klibansky et al. (1964/1979) state that "Despair" and "Dejection" often figure in poem on melancholy from the second quarter of the eighteenth century to "produce an uncanny and gloomy atmosphere" (229).

⁶⁷² According to neoclassical standards (see Copeland and Struck (2010), p. 8), Leapor uses the allegory primarily as a poetic device for personifications. Although the device also offers some implications about the individual in contrast to the abstract personifications, I do not pursue this idea as it is beyond the scope of this study.

⁶⁷³ Lobsien and Olejniczak Lobsien (2003), p. 295f.; my translation; German original: "Nach neuzeitlichem Verständnis ist die Melancholie kein invariantes, humoralpathologisch determiniertes Temperament neben drei anderen, sondern die ausgezeichnete Fähigkeit des Geistes zur Selbstgegenwärtigung. Die potenzierte menschliche Selbsterfahrung ist die (bzw. führt zur) Melancholie, insofern und wenn das Wissen des Geistes um sich nicht in eine mystische Transzendenzerfahrung umschlägt, sondern zu seiner Verortung und mithin der Einsicht in seine Limitiertheit führt."

Trying to leave this experience behind, the speaker and the nymph flee Melancholy's "horrid Mansion" (l. 101).

The passage between the fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness remains rather undefined in the poem. Entering the fields of Chearfulness, the speaker ascends from the underworld of melancholy to higher spheres through "floating Clouds" (l. 104) and "[s]treaks of chearful Azure", until the way opens to "a spacious Field" (l. 107). The blissful landscape is characterised by well-known pastoral elements, Golden-Age fancies and allusions to Christian ideas of paradise. The persona wanders through "Turf [...] of a beaoutous Green" (l. 111) and sees "crystal Lakes [...] border'd round with Trees" (l. 113). There are "Groves [which] no blasting Tempests know, / But still are blest with Fruits that ne'er decay" (ll. 115–16), "gaudy Hills", "fair Vallies" (l. 118) and "eternal Spring" (l. 114), which characterise the place almost beyond artistic expression: "A Field whose Charms no Painter e'er cou'd reach, / Though he shou'd borrow from the Poet's Heav'n" (ll. 108–9). The scenery is sensually pleasing not only to the visual but also the aural and olfactory senses of the speaker, who embraces "Joy seiz'd the ravish'd Spirits, while we breath'd / In Gales that tasted of immortal Sweets" (ll. 128–9).

The landscape is characterised by neoclassical tenets of aesthetics and stands in contrast to the melancholic disorder that the persona has just experienced. Right in the centre, the speaker encounters "Chearfulness, the Genius of the Place" (l. 133). Her sight already displays her celestial splendour:

Her Mien was graceful and her Features fair;
Continual Smiles dwelt on her dimpl'd Cheeks,
Her Hair was bound beneath a shining Crown,
Her Robes were Azure bright with golden Stars,
And in her Hand she held a silver Lute. (ll. 134–8)

Similar to her counterpart Melancholy, Chearfulness is surrounded by her court, which consists of her two sisters Content and Innocence, the first "often rais'd her Thankful Eyes to Heav'n" (l. 143), the latter attributed with "thoughtless Smiles [which] wou'd tame a Tiger's Rage" (l. 147). These "thoughtless Smiles" establish a clear, almost depreciative distance, creating a contrast between this sanguine temperament and the persona who fashions herself in the constant company of Thought.

Of further interest are Chearfulness' three maids of honour: Prosperity, Wealth and Health. Since Melancholy is guarded by "pining Sickness" (l. 56) and "quaking Poverty" (l. 58), it is coherent that Chearfulness should be attended by Prosperity, Wealth and Health. This holds true when the poem is read as a traditional

representation of the two diametrically opposed temperaments of the melancholy and the sanguine. There are numerous allusions to the traditional iconographic elements of both temperaments, for instance the element of earth and the darkness in the case of melancholy; the element of air and the eternal spring in the case of the sanguine.

Within the context of the eighteenth-century discourse of melancholy, however, the attribution of social and economic classes carries significance. As mentioned above, Cheyne associates the English Malady with the upper middle classes and their apparent intrinsic idleness. In this poem, however, the speaker inverts the social hierarchy of melancholy by attaching poverty to melancholy instead of wealth and prosperity. This means that the speaker does not just descend to melancholy but also to poverty and hence to the lower social classes. Subsequently, after her escape from melancholy, she ascends to Chearfulness and her threefold maids climb up the social ladder.

At the alleged height of her dream vision, namely the encounter with the “Natives of this happy land” (l. 170), the persona wakes up in a state of ecstasy in her “glowing breast” (l. 171). However, it is Melancholy, not Mirth, that prevails and leaves the speaker melancholic, since the persona has to realise that Chearfulness, her court and “[t]heir Glories vanish’d, and were seen no more” (ll. 173-4). Moreover, the frame of the poem is not quite completed: the persona seems to fall back into her former emotional state, in the same darkness with the same gloomy thoughts and memories that she displayed as Mira. This fragmentation of the speaker – into the third person poet-speaker, Mira, and the lyrical I (with her instance of reflection Thought) – turns out to be irreversible and the persona, transformed by her knowledge of her own mortality, remains the sole melancholic speaker at the end of the poem.

Mary Leapor’s poem “The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness” displays a variety of traditional, sometimes conventional elements of melancholy imagery and *topoi*. The poem clearly positions itself in the poetic tradition of melancholy. The double structure of the representation of melancholy and cheerfulness, in which mirth serves as a foil against which melancholy can be displayed, is but one of several examples. And yet, the formal-experiential side of literary melancholy writings is equally palpable in Leapor’s poem. Most evident are the various circular structures within the poetic text that share the same point of starting and ending – the melancholic

self.⁶⁷⁴ While the cycle of the different states of consciousness (wake-sleep-wake) is completed at the end of the poem, the restoration of the self (potentially another cycle) is not accomplished. Although the poetic-melancholic self of the poem is still melancholic at the end of the text, and therefore implies that the emotional state of the persona is identical with Mira's at the beginning, the different speaking positions – the split between the lyrical I and Mira – prohibit the completion of this circular structure. The knowledge of her mortality and death prevents a restoration of the softly melancholic, pensive state that accompanied Mira's melancholy at the beginning of the poem.

The text implies at several points that Mira tends towards melancholy or might even be melancholia herself e.g. by the alliteration of "musing *Mira*" (l. 4) and "musing Matron" (l. 80). Yet the poem also implies an ambiguity that the poet-speaker feels towards melancholy that can only be negotiated in a dream, in both a socially isolated and an approved space, the "pictur'd Regions and imagin'd Worlds" (l. 15). Here, Mira defines her ambiguous position: as both a melancholic and as a female voice in the tradition of literary melancholy writings.

Leapor's negotiation of melancholy is complex and both revels in and resists melancholy at the same time. Mira reflects upon herself in a grey area of 'rational' sadness and Miltonic pensiveness, which provides the source for her poetic imagination and her imagined, allegorical spiritual journey. At this point, Mira revels in rather than resists melancholy, though before long, the resistance becomes stronger as the dream vision presents Mira primarily as a spectator of black melancholy. The poetic-melancholic self, perpetually self-reflected in Thought, oscillates between the two faces of melancholy, between revelling and resisting.

Résumé

This chapter has attempted to make an argument for a more differentiated view on early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry. The generally accepted notion of melancholy poetry of the time has been shaped in particular by the literary prototypes of Milton's companion poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", as well as by Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" – prototypes that have governed our hermeneutic expectations to this day. This limited notion has accordingly confined its attention to prototypical features such as a contemplative and pensive

⁶⁷⁴ See Lobsien and Olejniczak Lobsien (2003), p. 296.

mode, an indulgence in melancholy, as well as a hedonistic and sentimental delight of the sweetly sad 'pleasures' of melancholy. Consequently, poems which are 'anti-melancholic' or which negate melancholy in the first instance have been excluded from the literary tradition of melancholy, and the more restricted traditional view has been unable to engage with these intrinsic ambiguities within the literary discourses about melancholy. Against the backdrop of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry outlined in the first part of this chapter, the second part suggests a remapping of melancholy literature by analyzing a selected, albeit representative group of poems by women writers between 1680-1750. These poems clearly and thoroughly explore more subtle aspects of melancholy, topical as well as structural elements of melancholy that have also been shaped by non-literary discourses (i.e. medical) of melancholy.

The poems were analysed with regards to the tension between revelling in and resisting melancholy, so as to offer different forms of poetic-melancholic selves in the context of a wider literary and cultural framework. The various experiences of melancholy negotiated in these texts do not offer pre-set forms of poetic-melancholic selves. On the contrary, due to the diversity of experiences and approaches, as well as the ambivalence between revelling in and resisting melancholy, the melancholic selves of these poems defy the patterns of pre-formed subjectivities such as the scholar, the poet, *the* melancholic. What most of these poetic selves share, besides their constant self-reflection and social disengagement, is their construction in terms of a melancholic femininity, which blends traditional elements with feminine, social, and cultural virtues, and challenges male melancholy traditions. They conquer imaginative spaces, populating them with highly diverse melancholic-poetic selves, such as Ardelia's incorporated, 'hostile' other (Finch), as well as Mira's alternative version of her melancholic self (Leapor). In Singer Rowe's case, Philomela's melancholic self is informed by the mythological and cultural knowledge of melancholy and is merged in a modest conflation with the nightingale – the bird of melancholy *per se*. In her "Ode to Melancholy", Carter blends melancholy with a positive outlook on religion and thus creates a poetic-melancholic self that unifies the positive notion of melancholic inspiration and the feminine virtue of a moderate, feminine religiosity. Wharton and Knight negotiate melancholy in terms of their poetic personae. Either defying the literary discourse of melancholy (Wharton) or fighting the medical symptoms of melancholy (Knight), these poems tend to resist melancholy. And yet, there arises a moment of ambivalence in which melancholy is

appropriated either as a necessity or as a poetic-medical cure and an emotional relief. Finally, Mary Leapor's poem "The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness" is an exception: it both revels in and resists melancholy and uses the dream trope to negotiate Leapor's poetic persona, Mira, as a melancholic self – in the phenomenon's entirety.

The experiences of melancholy these poetic selves undergo are as diverse as the approaches the poems choose to negotiate and to aestheticise. Although they employ standard imagery and *topoi* of melancholy, the discussion of literary prototypes has clearly shown that even spin-offs and modified versions of those 'markers' are recognised as melancholic.

In order to further differentiate the picture of women's eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, it will be necessary to focus on poems in which the melancholy experience is read beyond its literary topicality. This will inevitably defy the limits of the standard notion of melancholy poetry. To that end, the critical focus will be on the elegy as a melancholic genre. In the following chapter, the elegy is presented as a literary space for early eighteenth-century women writers to aestheticise, negotiate, and experiment with melancholy in their poetry.

4. Melancholic Mourning: The Elegy as Source of Female Poetic-Melancholic Selves

Introduction

This chapter aims at further remapping eighteenth-century female melancholy poetry by arguing for the inclusion of poems that do not comply with the popular topical elements of melancholy, and instead, offer different and possibly more subtle ways of conveying the melancholy experience. Within the continuum of literary melancholic writing such poems can be classified as ‘formal-experiential’,⁶⁷⁵ as they tend to foreground the emotional experience of melancholy as well as to imitate melancholy on a structural level. However, melancholy does not necessarily serve as the primary criterion of generic recognition, but might instead be negotiated in the poems’ subtext, or figure as one of several emotional experiences. Hence, although these poems might not have been studied as melancholic so far, they reveal their melancholic nature in close-reading procedures, which, in turn, will contribute to the remapping process.

The elegy seems a case in point. Notwithstanding the fact that all elegies share a certain proclivity to melancholy,⁶⁷⁶ it is particularly the so-called ‘female’ elegy that provides an opportunity for early eighteenth-century women writers to probe with the limits of melancholy experience. They consequently create poetic selves that oscillate between mourning and melancholy, a melancholy for which the ‘female’ elegy effectively rejects consolation. This rejection not only qualifies the ‘female’ elegy as melancholic *per se*, but creates what is usually understood by feminist literary critics to be a “transgressive” moment⁶⁷⁷, in which women poets go beyond the ‘male’ generic conventions of the elegy, thereby empowering female authorship. I will argue that this alleged violation of literary rules is predetermined by the discourse of mourning and thereby provides a literary space within socially and culturally acceptable structures.

As part of this argument I question both psychoanalytically informed feminist notions of female elegiac texts, as well as the gendering of melancholy.⁶⁷⁸ This chapter suggests instead a more dynamic approach to female melancholic writings that seeks

⁶⁷⁵ See chap. 2 of this study.

⁶⁷⁶ See Ramazani (1994), p. 30.

⁶⁷⁷ See for example, Phillippy (2002), p. 142.

⁶⁷⁸ Such as Juliana Schiesari, who seminally implemented the dichotomy of a culturally elevated, male form of melancholy versus a depreciated female form of mourning in *The Gendering of Melancholia* (1992).

to read the tension between mourning and melancholy not as a dichotomy, but as a continuum. Within this continuum the elegies of eighteenth-century women writers use different forms of poetic-melancholic selves to negotiate their emotional crises and contribute to a new understanding of melancholic femininity.

4.1 Elegy: Mourning or Melancholia?

Unlike its ancient Greek and Roman predecessors, the eighteenth-century elegy is conspicuously unhampered by generic conventions in terms of prosody and pre-set subject matter.⁶⁷⁹ Strictly defined by metre,⁶⁸⁰ the ancient Greek and Roman elegy covered a wide range of subject matters, e.g. love and eroticism, war, philosophical issues, but also (and increasingly) death and mourning.⁶⁸¹ From the ancient Greco-Roman traditions, two distinctive types of elegy were still prominent in the eighteenth century: the pastoral and, above all, the funeral elegy – and with them the focus on death and mourning.⁶⁸²

Both types trace back to a set of conventions that was established in the course of the genre's tradition and which reached far beyond its original metrical specifications. These conventions fulfil important psychological needs by upholding a complex interplay between cultural and social practices: between (public) mourning and (private) grief and poetry.⁶⁸³ The following generic conventions of the elegy are the

⁶⁷⁹ For a brief, but well-structured introduction to the genre, see Kennedy (2007). For a comprehensive, historically founded and chronological overview of the elegy from its ancient Greek origins until today, see *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (2010).

⁶⁸⁰ Etymologically, the word elegy derives from the Greek *elegos*, i.e. "mournful song," and mostly connoted the genre's specific metre, the elegiac distich – a couplet usually written in alternate dactylic hexameters and pentameters.

⁶⁸¹ See Kennedy (2007), p. 11f.

⁶⁸² That death and mourning become the predominant themes in elegies derive from the literary development of the funeral elegy as a distinctive subgenre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of post-Reformation England (see Kennedy (2007), p. 4). As Dennis Kay argues in his *Melodious Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (1990), the English funeral elegy is a direct result of the Reformation which triggered a radical shift of "[t]he focus of the funeral observances [...] towards the secular. Ceremonies became, on the one hand, representations of the status of the deceased at the time of death and, on the other, expressions of the reaction of the living" (3). The new emphasis on secularised funeral observances and ceremonies prepared the ground for the funeral elegy that offered both to pay tribute to the newly required individuality as well as a set of structural (praise, lament, consolation) and topical conventions. Increasingly losing its fixed prosodical features, "the funeral elegy was essentially a form without a form, a performance in which a high value was attached to individuality (of the speaker as much as the subject), invention, and improvisation, a genre defined by its occasion" (5). As Lorna Clymer has recently pointed out in her article "The Funeral Elegy in Early Modern Britain" (2010), the funeral elegy flourished abundantly from the mid-seventeenth century onwards and "was essentially exhausted" by 1750 (170). Again, Gray's famous "Elegy" serves as a watershed here – and the funeral elegy should be also considered preparing the ground for the elegiac mode dominant in the second half of the century, as it "facilitated a pensive, apparently personal meditation on death, or more generally, an exploration of the keenly-felt loss of any kind [...]" (183).

⁶⁸³ See Sacks (1985), p. 2.

most defining and frequently used: a pastoral context, the use of repetitions, refrains and repeated questions, the outbreak of anger, a procession of mourners, and most importantly the (poetical) movement from grief, mourning to consolation, resurrection, and renewal.⁶⁸⁴

More often than not, recent criticism of the elegy has turned to psychoanalysis to read elegies.⁶⁸⁵ This has had far-reaching implications for both the elegy as a poetic configuration of loss as well as for melancholy and its relationship to mourning. Ultimately, the psychoanalytic distinction between mourning and melancholy as discussed in Freud's seminal essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) also influenced feminist debates on the gendering of melancholy. However, the psychoanalytical approach does not come without its problems. Besides the inherent and often-quoted problem of the anachronistic application of psychoanalytic ideas to texts that predate Freud,⁶⁸⁶ another major problem lies in the unquestioned transference of a medical concept onto a literary text, or its usage as a tool for literary analysis.

Yet, since this approach has been so ubiquitous in this context of study,⁶⁸⁷ I will briefly discuss Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", before turning to the generic consequences of psychoanalytical readings for the elegy, and the implications for the theoretical debates on melancholy and gender relevant to this study.

Digression: Freud, the Elegy, and the Gendering of Melancholy

In tune with the long tradition of melancholy, Freud has serious difficulties in precisely differentiating between mourning and melancholy. His first ambiguous

⁶⁸⁴ See Sacks (1985), p. 2 and Kennedy (2007), p. 6.

⁶⁸⁵ Seminal studies and texts for the field of elegy, which choose psychoanalysis as their theoretical approach are, e.g. Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy. Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985), Dennis Kay: *Melodious Tears. The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (1990), Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning. The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994) as well as the most influential works on 'female' elegy such as Celeste M. Schenck's influential paper "Feminism and Deconstruction. Re-Constructing the Elegy" (1986), and Melissa F. Zeiger, *Beyond Consolation. Death, Sexuality, and the Changing Shapes of Elegy* (1997) to name just the most influential.

⁶⁸⁶ Stephen Greenblatt's essay "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture" (1990) summarises the most common arguments against the psychoanalytic approach to early modern texts, whereas Juliana Schiesari's "Introduction" to *The Gendering of Melancholia* (1992) responds to Greenblatt's arguments in favour of psychoanalysis as a theoretical approach.

⁶⁸⁷ "Mourning and Melancholia" is, of course, not the only text in which Freud deals with the two emotional states. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), for instance, Freud revised his construction of mourning and melancholia and in which he made identification with (and not substitution of) the lost other – a process which Freud considered a failure of mourning in 1917 – paramount to the formation of the self. For a thorough discussion and overview of Freud's various writings on the changing notion of mourning and melancholy, also in view of the modern elegy-theory, see Tammy Clewell: "Mourning beyond Melancholia: Freud's Psychoanalysis of Loss" (2004).

definition of a 'normal' (as in 'non-pathological') affect of mourning and a pathological form of mourning (i.e. melancholy, whose exact borders cannot "be established with certainty"⁶⁸⁸) is followed by a brief discussion of similarities between both conditions. Besides the commonly shared cause of mourning and melancholy, which he posits as "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction [...] such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" –,⁶⁸⁹ mourning and melancholy are mainly identifiable according to their similarities: "profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity [...]."⁶⁹⁰

However, according to Freud, the fundamental difference between the mourning process and melancholia lies in the nature of loss. Announced as the mutual and yet differing cause of both conditions, loss pertaining to melancholia is "related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious."⁶⁹¹ The difference in the nature of loss leads, in brief, to Freud's famous dictum of the ultimate difference between mourning and melancholia: "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself."⁶⁹² Thus, although the melancholic seems to undergo a similar internal process to the mourner, the unconscious loss experienced in melancholia leads to an identification and internalisation of the lost object⁶⁹³ which, as Ilit Ferber summarises, "split[s] it [i.e. the ego, S.B.] apart, dividing it from the inside and rendering the ego itself lost. The internalisation of the loss presents an interior absence within the ego, turning the latter into the battlefield of separation, which at the end of the process is emptied out."⁶⁹⁴ Unlike the mourner, who eventually overcomes his loss by working through his memories of the lost object and eventually reattaching his libido to another object, the melancholic does not succeed in de- and reattaching his or her emotional ties from and to a new object, but remains strongly attached to the lost object now internalised within the ego. Thus, melancholy "[...] behaves like an open wound,

⁶⁸⁸ Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 243.

⁶⁸⁹ Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 243.

⁶⁹⁰ Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 244.

⁶⁹¹ Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 245.

⁶⁹² Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 246.

⁶⁹³ "The free libido was not displaced onto another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 249; emphasis in the original).

⁶⁹⁴ Ferber (2006), p. 67.

drawing to itself cathectic energies [...] from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished.”⁶⁹⁵

Seminal critics of the elegy derive some of the most important generic conventions of the genre from Freud’s distinction between mourning and melancholia, which pictures mourning as a healing process and melancholy as an unabated “open wound”. Based on Freud’s cycle of mourning, Peter Sacks, for example, introduces his highly ambivalent and selective concept of the elegist as a “successful mourner.”⁶⁹⁶ Correlating with the elegy’s cyclic movement from grief to consolation and subsequent renewal, the ‘successful’ mourner manages “to invent and accept [i.e. substitute; S.B.] an adequate figure for what [he has] lost” and in so doing, regains a new self after a period of ‘successful’ mourning.⁶⁹⁷ For the ‘successful’ mourner, the poetic text itself becomes the adequate substitute through which the mourner overcomes his grief and is consoled. The elegy’s overly important generic pattern of lamenting and praising the dead in order to find consolation⁶⁹⁸ singles out the ‘successful’ mourner. Therefore, the elegy becomes a poem of mourning, but not of melancholy, since this would imply a case of ‘unsuccessful’ or pathological mourning.⁶⁹⁹

Freud’s essay on mourning and melancholy and the ambiguous distinction of the two terms serves as a base for feminist criticism of the gendering of melancholy.⁷⁰⁰ In recent decades, Schiesari’s study *The Gendering of Melancholia* (1992) has been most significant in this field. Her notion of the gendered politics of melancholy, which entails a fundamental “split between a higher-valued form understood as male and a

⁶⁹⁵ Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 253. Generally, cathexis (*Besetzung*) describes the investment of mental or emotional energy in an object or idea. In Freudian terms, it refers to the investment and attachment of the libido.

⁶⁹⁶ Sacks (1985), p. 6. Whilst Apollo and Pan, for instance, are successful mourners, since they create a (transformed) substitute for their losses – in Apollo’s case, it is Daphne who is transformed into a laurel tree and its culturally determined artefact a laurel wreath, in Pan’s case the flute made from reeds, i.e. the transformed nymph Syrinx –, many other mythological characters, e.g. Niobe, Cynus, Pyramus and Thisbe as well as Orpheus remain unsuccessful in their grief which subsequently leads to their destruction (see 6ff.), or, in Freudian terms, to melancholia.

⁶⁹⁷ Sacks (1985), p. 6.

⁶⁹⁸ In the following, this pattern will be abbreviated to ‘lament-praise-consolation’.

⁶⁹⁹ Sack’s concept of the ‘successful’ mourner has been criticised because of its selective nature. It excludes archetypal mourners like Orpheus who has to be regarded as ‘unsuccessful’ since he does not overcome his initial grief and fails in Freudian terms (see e.g. Kennedy (2007), p. 94f.).

⁷⁰⁰ Especially psychoanalytically informed feminist theorists of melancholy, such as Kaja Silverman (e.g. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1988)) and Julia Kristeva (e.g. *Black Sun: Melancholia and Depression* (1989)) hinge their arguments on Freud’s pivotal essays on melancholy, i.e. “Mourning and Melancholia” and *The Ego and the Id*.

lower-valued one coded as female,”⁷⁰¹ is strongly indebted to her re-reading of Freud’s early essay.

Schiesari criticises Freud’s concept for his implicit apotheosis of melancholy and reference to Hamlet as an emblem for the cultural myth of the male melancholic intellectual.⁷⁰² Freud’s underlying notion of melancholia, according to Schiesari, is strongly defined by a heightened ability of self-criticism and self-reproach on moral grounds, which provides the melancholic with a privileged access to profound truth.⁷⁰³ Schiesari reads Freud’s reference to Hamlet as the striking example of melancholia who, despite of (or due to) his apparent illness, is endowed with this “keener eye”. Schiesari observes that Hamlet has Freud’s unquestioned admiration of the long-standing tradition and apotheosis of the male melancholic and his intellectual (and moral) superiority. Moreover, she disapproves of the fact that the fictitious Hamlet is the only melancholic Freud provides with a name, whereas female melancholics remain “mere *types*” and nameless in Freud’s essay.⁷⁰⁴ The devalued pathological and clinical side of melancholy appears to be reserved for the female case studies in Schiesari’s analysis of Freud: “On the one hand, Freud gives us a ‘clinical’ picture of the pathology of melancholia, but on the other hand, by referring to Hamlet and the melancholic’s visionary talents [...], he points to a cultural apotheosis of its victims, whose sense of loss and ‘melancholy’ is thus the sign of their special nature.”⁷⁰⁵ The question that arises from Freud’s differentiation of male privileged melancholy and female pathological melancholy (i.e. depression) is “if, where, and how” women fit into the notion of a creative form of a neurosis such as melancholy.⁷⁰⁶ The answer to this central question leads to Schiesari’s main argument and her idea of the gendering of melancholy:

⁷⁰¹ Schiesari (1992), p. 16.

⁷⁰² For her thorough re-reading of Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia”, see Schiesari (1992), pp. 36-62.

⁷⁰³ See Schiesari (1992), p. 5. In Freud’s words, this reads: “He [i.e. the melancholic, S.B.] also seems to us justified in certain other self-accusations; it is merely that he has a keener eye for the truth than other people who are not melancholic. [...] it may be, so far as we know, that he has come pretty near to understanding himself; we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind” (Freud (1917/1953-1974), p. 246).

⁷⁰⁴ Schiesari (1992), p. 10; emphasis in the original.

⁷⁰⁵ Schiesari (1992), p. 11.

⁷⁰⁶ Schiesari (1992), p. 11.

[...] the 'grievous' suffering of the melancholic artist is a gendered one, an eroticized nostalgia that recuperates loss in the name of an imaginary unit and that also gives to the melancholic *man* (the *homo melancholicus*) a privileged position within literary, philosophical, and artistic canons. [...] At the same time, such an impressive translation of lack seems persistently denied to women, whose association with loss and grief is expressed by less flattering allusions to widow's weed, inarticulate weeping, or signs of ritualistic (but intellectually and artistically unaccredited) mourning.⁷⁰⁷

According to Schiesari, women are denied the same cultural value and therefore denied the same status for their losses, and hence also denied access to a privileged cultural tool: melancholy. In other words, the same emotional and psychological crisis leads to highly different gendered results, which clearly reflects prevalent patriarchal structures: while men advance to melancholic genius and artists, women become anonymous and voiceless case studies in medical, and later psychiatric, treatises. Schiesari argues for a dichotomy between the male-connoted privileged form of melancholy, which fundamentally has "its source of empowerment in the *devaluing* of the historical reality of women's disempowerment,"⁷⁰⁸ and a culturally debased form of female mourning.

Schiesari's overall argument is problematic in numerous respects: Most importantly, it neglects culturally changing practices of mourning in different historical periods.⁷⁰⁹ It is also generally too rigid and does not allow any permeability between mourning and melancholy, and so Schiesari's argument itself remains within a dichotomous structure of mourning and melancholy. In contrast, the historical analyses of the medical as well as the religious discourses of melancholy in the eighteenth century, for example, suggest rather fluid borders between these two emotional states.⁷¹⁰

Although I fundamentally agree, like others,⁷¹¹ with Schiesari's theses of the general gendering of melancholy by way of differing cultural evaluations, I argue that in the early eighteenth century mourning did not serve as an "alternative" or even counter-discourse to melancholy,⁷¹² but formed an integral part of melancholy that was culturally and socially available to both men and women. Regarding literary writing, I contend that the elegy in general, but especially the 'female' elegy, offered a viable

⁷⁰⁷ Schiesari (1992), p. 11f., italics in the original.

⁷⁰⁸ Schiesari (1992), p. 12.

⁷⁰⁹ See Phillippy (2002), p. 5f.

⁷¹⁰ For a summary of the medical nexus between mourning and melancholy, see MacDonald (1981) and Jackson (1986). The religious discourse of melancholy will be discussed below in more detail, see p. 205.

⁷¹¹ See e.g. Backscheider (2008), p. 277 and Phillippy (2002), p. 5f.

⁷¹² Schiesari (1992), p. xi.

way for women poets circa 1700 to negotiate experiences of both loss *and* melancholy and to create specific forms of poetic-melancholic subjectivities.⁷¹³

The 'Female' Elegy: *Between Mourning and Melancholy*

In general, the elegy was a popular genre and formed a substantial part of women's writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷¹⁴ It is the genre's high versatility that upsets "the putative divisions between high and low culture, literary and non-literary women, private and public, occasional and non-occasional"⁷¹⁵ and provides the literary framework not only for Augustan women writers' "textual expression of grief"⁷¹⁶ – but also, so I argue, for melancholy.

Historically, the eighteenth-century elegy had a paradoxical purpose: on the one hand, it was the poetic point of origin for the elevated, highly melancholic and masculine elegiac mode that Gray's "Elegy" epitomises;⁷¹⁷ on the other hand, the eighteenth-century elegy was a highly private, personal, and above all feminised poetic form, whose cultural and literary value was considerably diminished by Augustan and neoclassical literary theorists.⁷¹⁸ It is this second implication – the elegy as a private, personal, and feminised form –, which provides 'easy access' to the genre for women poets circa 1700.⁷¹⁹

The cultural and literary devaluation of the elegy was mainly motivated by its alleged lack of capacity for improving the moral benefit of the reader as it was thought poetry generally should. In 1712, Joseph Trapp states in one of his lectures on the hierarchy of poetic genres:

⁷¹³ Surprisingly, Schiesari does not consider the elegy in her close readings of Italian Renaissance texts by women writers and hence neglects the canonical genre of mourning *per se*.

⁷¹⁴ See Lilley (1992), p. 72, and Backscheider (2008), p. 271.

⁷¹⁵ Lilley (1992), p. 72.

⁷¹⁶ Phillippy (2002), p. 9.

⁷¹⁷ For the elegiac mode, see p. 124. Also see Schor (1994), p. 19ff., and Backscheider (2008).

⁷¹⁸ See Trapp (1712/1742), p. 25. Joseph Trapp, first appointed professor of poetry at Oxford in 1708, dedicated one of his *Lectures on poetry read in the schools of natural philosophy at Oxford* (Lat. *Praelectiones poeticae* 1711-1719; Engl. trans. 1742) to elegy ("Lecture XIII Of Elegy"). My reading of Trapp (and later Shenstone) is based on Schor's study *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (1994), in which she provides a detailed discussion of the cultural devaluation of the elegy, and its contemporaneous revaluation in terms of the elegiac mode, against the wider cultural construction of mourning during the eighteenth century.

⁷¹⁹ Although Backscheider (2008) considers the elegy a popular genre for women poets, she also states that the women had a "vexed relationship" with the elegy, since the genre was, on the one hand, designated by its 'masculine' elitist elegiac mode and, on the other hand, by a culturally devaluated, 'feminine' form of mourning (see 277).

This Rule [i.e. that pleasure in poetry serves as “Handmaid”⁷²⁰ for moral improvement; S.B.] relates principally to the more perfect and sublimer kinds of Poetry, and especially the Epic and the Dramatic [i.e. the Tragedy, S.B.]. For we don’t pretend that Epigram, Elegy, Song and the like, conduce much to the Improvement of Virtue. It is enough, if these Writings keep within the Bounds of Chastity, and give no Offense in Good-manners.⁷²¹

Due to its lack of moral impact, Trapp assigns the elegy its low rank in the literary hierarchy, lying between pastoral and the lowest-ranked epigram.⁷²² He further diminishes the elegy’s impact by describing it in highly gendered terms that emphasise the alleged ‘feminine’ nature of the genre.⁷²³ He thus continues to describe the elegy as “the sweetest, the most engaging, and every way worthy of our consideration,”⁷²⁴ – attributes that, as Schor points out, both highlight the genre’s apparent lack of morality and virtue, as well as its “*feminine* qualities of poetry.”⁷²⁵ These feminine qualities become more discernible when Trapp further outlines the genre’s main purpose as “easy and soft; to flow in one even Current and captivate the Ear with Melody. It must be free from all Asperity, from every Thing that is harsh, or unpleasant.”⁷²⁶ “Elegy aims”, Trapp states, “not to be witty or facetious, acrimonious or severe, majestic or sublime; but is smooth, humble and unaffected; nor yet is she abject in her Humility, but becoming, elegant, and attractive” – and thus relegates the genre to a private and domesticated form, which is closely associated with common feminine virtues and qualities.⁷²⁷ Morally dubious, emotional (and hence irrational), and intellectually easy to master (since the genre applied to hardly any literary conventions) – Trapp depreciates the elegy as a feminine and popular poetic form, in stark contrast to the masculine heroic epic and tragedy.

⁷²⁰ Trapp (1712/1742), p. 25.

⁷²¹ Trapp (1712/1742), p. 25.

⁷²² The top of the hierarchy is occupied by tragedy and epic that are appropriately discussed as the climax at the end of Trapp’s lecture series (see Schor (1994), p. 22).

⁷²³ Also see Schor (1994), p. 21ff.

⁷²⁴ Trapp (1712/1742), p. 163.

⁷²⁵ Schor (1994), p. 22. Generally, Trapp (1712/1742) defines elegy in terms of the funeral elegy, although he is well aware of the diversity of subject matters, styles, and forms. He states: “Under the Title of Elegy, is generally and primarily understood a mournful Poem, bewailing the Loss of some Person lately dead; and sometimes has any after other melancholy plaintive circumstance for its Subject” (163).

⁷²⁶ Trapp (1712/1742), p. 166f.

⁷²⁷ Trapp (1712/1742), p. 169.

Another eighteenth-century theorist of the elegy, the poet William Shenstone,⁷²⁸ describes the feminization of the elegy in terms of both the poetic text as well as its audience:⁷²⁹

The mind in which love and grief at once predominate is softened to an excess. Love-elegy therefore is more negligent of order and design, and, being addressed chiefly to the ladies, requires little more than tenderness and perspicuity. Elegies that are formed upon promiscuous incidents, and addressed to the world in general, inculcate some sort of moral, and admit a different degree of reasoning, thought, and order.⁷³⁰

Again, the depreciative tone concerning (excessive) love-elegies as a feminine literary phenomenon and the elevation of the elegiac mode, which is clearly associated with masculine and, above all, enlightenment qualities such as “reasoning, thought, and order” is hard to miss.⁷³¹ Similar to Trapp (and in tune with neo-classical ideas of literature), Shenstone also poses the question of the moral impact of elegy. In his case, however, he appears to be far more optimistic about linking virtue to pensive reflection – and is therefore more in line with the Shaftesburian notion of melancholy:

The most important end of *all* poetry is to encourage virtue. [...]; *elegy* is of a species which illustrates and endears the *private*. There is a truly virtuous pleasure connected with many pensive contemplations, which it is the province and excellency of elegy to enforce. This [...] has discovered sweets in *melancholy* which we could not find in *mirth*; and has led us with success to the dusty *urn*, when we could draw no pleasure from the sparkling bowl [...].⁷³²

Shenstone is certainly to be considered an important forerunner of the elegiac mode of the latter half of the eighteenth century, as he merges elegy with those aspects that underline the positive sides of melancholy.⁷³³ However, since there was (and still is) at

⁷²⁸ Shenstone’s “A Prefatory Essay on Elegy” was first published in 1764 together with his “Elegies, Written on Many Different Occasions” as part of *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone Esq.* However, as it was most likely written in the mid-1740s, hence before the publication of Gray’s “Elegy”, it was probably known to Shenstone’s coterie and other friends. For more information, see Schor (1994), p. 245, FN 9 and Sickles (1932), p. 9.

⁷²⁹ See Schor (1994), p. 24.

⁷³⁰ Shenstone (1764/1777), p. 23 (my emphasis).

⁷³¹ Also see Schor (1994), p. 23f.

⁷³² Shenstone (1764/1777), p. 18f.

⁷³³ The development and re-evaluation of elegy towards the elegiac mode can also be observed in “An Essay on Elegies” published anonymously in 1767. The text shows that by that time the boundaries between elegy and elegiac mode were even more blurred, and that the term elegy was increasingly replaced by the respective mode, and hence closely associated with melancholy. Choosing Gray’s “Elegy” as its prime example, the anonymous writer states: “Elegy, it must be confessed, has often extended her province, and the moral contemplations of the poet have sometimes worn her melancholy garb.” As in the celebrated poem of Mr. Gray, written in a church-yard. For though she is generally the selfish mourner of domestic distress [...]; she [i.e. elegy; S.B.] sometimes enlarges her reflections upon universal calamities, and with a becoming dignity, as in the inspired writers, pathetically weeps over the fall of nations” (221).

times no clear distinction between the elegy and the elegiac,⁷³⁴ Shenstone's claim for melancholy has to be considered in respect to both. He certainly widened the topical range of elegy and clearly associates its inherent mourning with melancholy: "[...] I think we may *conclude* thus much; that *elegy* [...] *includes* a tender and querulous idea: [...] admits a variety of subjects; [...] It throws its melancholy *stole* over pretty different objects; which, like the dresses at a funeral procession, gives them all kind of solemn and uniform appearance."⁷³⁵

As research has suggested,⁷³⁶ the eighteenth-century elegy underwent a process during which it was elevated to the masculine mode of the elegiac and at the same time devalued as a personal, amateur, and feminised poetic form. Both the elegiac mode, as well as the elegy were regarded as suitable vehicles for melancholy. As the elegy was transformed into a low-considered genre, women writers profited from the genre's low-threshold accessibility. They performed copiously in this 'private' genre and gradually appropriated its generic conventions according to their cultural and literary needs.

It follows that the suitability of the elegy for female melancholic writing is based on the genre's cultural as well as literary transformations. Especially the so-called 'female' elegy offers a literary space in which alternative forms of female poetic-melancholic selves are constructed in the early eighteenth century. I argue that these spaces for literary development, however, do not figure as literary acts of transgression, but are predetermined by various discourses of mourning as well as of melancholy. Hence, women poets had room with which to experiment and oscillate between mourning and melancholy – and still remained within the social conventions and notions of eighteenth-century femininity.

The 'female' elegy,⁷³⁷ as introduced by feminist critics over the last few decades,⁷³⁸ differs greatly from the 'masculine' elegy in social, poetic, and psychological

⁷³⁴ See most comprehensively, Bloomfield's article "The Elegy and the Elegiac Mode: Praise and Alienation" (1986), and see chap. 3.1 in this study, p. 109.

⁷³⁵ Shenstone (1764/1777), p. 16. As Sickles (1932) puts it: "It is Shenstone's hope to reclaim the form [of elegy; S.B.] for melancholy, to exclude on the one hand, the more joyous aspects of love, and to include on the other hand a variety of other subjects over which elegy may throw its 'melancholy stole'" (9f).

⁷³⁶ See Schor (1994).

⁷³⁷ I consider the term 'female' elegy as problematic since it implies a specific way of writing which is related to the sex of the writer. Since especially modern elegies, however, often comply with the conventions of the so-called 'female' elegy, although their writers are male, the term as such is altogether inept. I thus use it in single quotation marks.

⁷³⁸ Above all Celeste M. Schenck whose significant paper "Feminism and Deconstruction. Re-Constructing the Elegy" (1986) serves as the foundation stone of feminist critical debates on the elegy and refutes seemingly 'un-gendered', or rather gender-non-sensitive approaches to elegy like the one

function, as well as in the generic conventions used. Unlike their male counterparts, female elegists gain their poetic identity through attachment to and connectedness with their (personal) dead, rather than through separation and severance from predecessors. They therefore create, as Schenck phrases it, “new or alternative elegiac scenarios that arise from a distinctly feminine psycho-sexual experience.”⁷³⁹ Hence, the ‘female elegy’ is predominantly characterised by the elegist’s sense of a continued relationship with their dead.⁷⁴⁰ This effectively makes her unravel the genre’s prominent pattern of shifting from lamenting and praising of the dead to an acceptance of death.⁷⁴¹ The female elegist defers the apotheosis and transcendence of the dead, and at the same time also defers the genre’s most identifying feature – consolation.⁷⁴² This is a critical moment in the ‘female’ elegy since it triggers two important literary and cultural consequences that I want to suggest go beyond Schenck and others: The ‘female’ elegist is *per se* ‘unsuccessful’ and hence melancholic, as she remains in a state of emotional and social desolateness. Since this oscillation between grief and mourning with no hope of solace is the predominant mood and experience of the ‘female’ elegy, questions regarding the impact of melancholy in these poems are inevitable.⁷⁴³ However strong this impact may be, women’s mourning in the ‘female’ elegy is, through the deferment of consolation,

by Peter Sacks (1985) who denies the gender aspect of the genre as follows: “While I wish to draw attention to the hitherto largely unasked question of how differently men and women mourn, for the purposes of this study it is the substantial overlap in men’s and women’s mourning that should be stressed. Until as recently as Clampitt’s poem [i.e. the US-American poet Amy Clampitt’s elegy on her mother “A Procession at Candlemas” (1983); S.B.], elegies written by women, such as Anne Bradstreet’s or Emily Brontë’s, have tended primarily to confirm this common ground” (13). By contrast, Schenck (1986) argues: “[T]he unsettling coherence of the female funeral aesthetic across centuries suggests that women poets have clearly enjoyed an elegiac mode of their own, an intertextually verifiable tradition of mourning their dead in poetic form that calls the genre, as patriarchally codified, into question” (23). For a discussion of the ‘female’ elegy as political protest, see Stone (1991).

⁷³⁹ Schenck (1986), p. 18.

⁷⁴⁰ Unlike the ‘masculine’ elegy, which according to Schenck, is “a resolutely patriarchal genre: a song sung over the bier of a friend-forbear in order both to lay the ancestors to rest and to seize the pipes of the pastoral elegy from his barely cold hands, it is modelled on archaic initiation rituals of younger man by an elder.”⁷⁴⁰ Schenck’s “masculine elegy [...] is above all a vocational poem” and – not unlike the discourse of melancholy literature – “excludes the feminine from its perimeter except as muse principle or attendant nymph”(13). Hence, the ‘masculine’ elegy revolves around the idea of contest, poetic inheritance and tradition (see Kennedy (2007), p. 13).

⁷⁴¹ See Schenck (1986), p. 18.

⁷⁴² See Schenck (1986), p. 24. Schenck heavily questions this pattern in the ‘masculine’ elegy as “the deification of the dead [...] [that] lifts him [i.e. the deceased poet] out of nature, out of the poem, and out of the successor’s way” (15). In other words, the all-decisive moment of consolation and renewal turns into a moment of poetic-professional initiation and succession of the younger elegist.

⁷⁴³ There have been attempts before to establish the elegy as a melancholic key genre of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers, e.g. by Franke (2004), Blackmore (2009), and Rippl (2010). Yet, none these articles attempt to relate melancholy and elegy on a theoretical level, but present exemplary readings of English and American female-authored elegies as literary manifestations of female melancholic subjectivities.

constructed as excessive, immoderate, and irrational in terms of cultural and social notions of feminine grief.

Feminist literary critics of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women poetry define this crucial moment of the refusal of consolation as both transgressive and empowering.⁷⁴⁴ Although early modern death manuals and cultural practices condemn and “revise [...] women’s long association with ritualistic acts of mourning to portray feminine sorrow as excessive, violent, and immoderate,”⁷⁴⁵ it has been argued that despite the continuous cultural devaluation of women’s lamentation and grief, women writers experience authorial empowerment through exactly this emotional immoderateness.⁷⁴⁶ Other critics, meanwhile, put forward a similar argument with regard to eighteenth-century elegy and women poets. Against the background of recent psychological research on grief work,⁷⁴⁷ Mellor reads the refusal of consolation in eighteenth-century elegies by women writers as “intuitive” grieving, by which she stresses the continuity of grief as a different, however viable and ‘normal’ form of mourning and thus revalorises feminine mourning. She states that female elegists “endorse intuitive grieving, affirming the necessity of passionate and repeated weeping. Such an overt emotional response, they would claim, is a fundamental dimension of sensibility, that capacity to feel intensely that is everywhere associated with moral compassion and altruistic benevolence in eighteenth-century philosophy and culture.”⁷⁴⁸ Accordingly, feminine intuitive grieving in the eighteenth century is not only psychologically ‘healthy’, but also

⁷⁴⁴ I explicitly refer at this point to Phillippy’s study *Women, Death and Literature in Post-Reformation England* (2002) and Mellor’s recent article “‘Anguish No Cessation Knows’: Elegy and the British Woman Poet, 1660-1834” (2010).

⁷⁴⁵ Phillippy (2002), p. 1. Phillippy’s argument also carries a strong religious note, since feminine immoderate and excessive grief becomes conflated with Catholic mourning and is continuously stressed as “an imperfect version of men’s stoic sorrow and Catholic liturgical excesses as imperfect (per)versions of reformed ceremonies. As a result, the Protestant male subject understands himself as a moderate mourner” (8).

⁷⁴⁶ See Phillippy (2002), p. 3.

⁷⁴⁷ In order to avoid psychoanalytically informed categorisations such as ‘successful’ (i.e. ‘healthy’) versus ‘unsuccessful’ (i.e. ‘pathological’) mourning that Sacks has installed for the critical field of elegy, Mellor (2010) rests her argument on more recent psychological research that describes other modes of mourning as “different but equally healthy and normal” (443). The two modes that Mellor introduces are “instrumental” and “intuitive” grievers, which appear to be influenced by gender, however not determined by it (444). Whereas men tend to be instrumental grievers who “typically experiences grief as an intellectual rather than an emotional experience” (443), women, meanwhile, are regarded as grieving “intuitively,” which is expressed in “form of tears, depression, anxiety, loss of appetite, inability to concentrate, anger or irritability” (443). Moreover, intuitive grievers consider “grief-work [...] a life-long process that has become part of their selves, an on-going and valuable emotion” (443). Although Mellor stresses the point that both modes of grieving are equally “valid” (444), the negative or ‘pathological’ notion of intuitive grieving remains palpable, and possibly closer to the Freudian idea of healthy mourning and pathological melancholy than one would hope.

⁷⁴⁸ Mellor (2010), p. 447.

culturally and morally superior and hence empowering in the construction of poetic subjectivities, especially towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁷⁴⁹

By contrast, I contend that although breaking the generic pattern of praise-lament-consolation (especially the refusal of consolation) as part of the 'female' elegy provides the literary space in which women writers express their grief, they also negotiate and experiment with melancholy as it is caused by the deferment of solace and the emotional rigour of the female elegist. The speakers of such poems experiment with literary negotiations and constructions of their poetic selves through the experience of grief *and* melancholy. As the analyses in chapter 4.2 will show, it is not a choice between either grief/mourning or melancholy, but rather an oscillation between both emotions, which serves as a foundation for the poetic construction of female melancholic selves.

Moreover, I would like to stress that this moment of refusal is not an act of cultural or social transgression or empowerment. Rather, the literary space provided by this specific type of elegy is predetermined by socio-cultural,⁷⁵⁰ medical⁷⁵¹ as well as

⁷⁴⁹ "Grief-work becomes what women do, especially in poetry. And conversely, the sign of the successful female poet lies in her ability to construct a persuasive representation of the woman who loves, loses what she loves, weeps for what she has lost, and seeks only to die. In their work grief is not so much an emotion as a literary performance" (Mellor (2010), p. 450).

⁷⁵⁰ The socio-cultural discourses of mourning and its gendering of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in conjunction with female poetic writing have been comprehensively researched by Phillippy (2002) and Schor (1994). Schor discusses elegy as a literary-textual case in point for a greater shift of the cultural value and increasing centrality of public mourning in the eighteenth century, in lieu of the establishment of public morality *via* sympathy. This change is, according to Schor, accompanied by a shift in the gendering of mourning (see 19-48) and, consequently, of elegy as well as of its literary transformation towards the elegiac mode (also see chap. 3.1, p. 124). Pivotal to this development of the new centrality of public mourning is, as Schor argues, the increasing influence of moral sense theory – especially of Shaftesbury, Hume, and, above all, Smith. Linking an innate sense of virtue of the individual to the "normative morals of a society" (7), Adam Smith's idea of sympathy, finally, becomes the currency to pay the tribute to the dead by the public act of mourning (see 34f.). Thus, mourning became increasingly public and significant, and hence a masculine act. The masculinisation of mourning, in turn, goes hand in hand with the establishment of the elegiac as a subjective, introspective, "morally beneficent" and highly melancholic mode (21).

⁷⁵¹ For grief as the cause of melancholy, see Burton (1624/2001), pt. I, pp. 357-363. Jackson (1986) demonstrates how tightly knitted grief, mourning and melancholy have been throughout the century. Arguing primarily in view of medical thinking, Jackson discusses shared properties of melancholy and grief/mourning, such as sadness, sorrow, and emotional dejection (see 311). Moreover, since melancholy was commonly defined as a non-feverish sadness without specific cause until the late seventeenth century, grief and mourning – as a specific sadness over the loss of a beloved person – were readily identified as probable causes for melancholy, especially if the time of bereavement appeared to be prolonged and excessive (see 316f.). Despite the familiarity and presence of death in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Michael MacDonald has shown in his ground-breaking study *Mystical Bedlam* (1981) that grief and subsequent excessive, i.e. beyond the borders which were perceived as moderate and appropriate, grief and sorrow were commonly considered causes of pathological mental disturbances, such as melancholy. Based on the case studies of the seventeenth-century astrological physician and clergymen Richard Napier (1559-1637), patients that suffered from mental disturbances due to grief and sorrow made a significant group of Napier's diagnoses. In this context, Women were disproportionately highly afflicted by the pathological excess of grief and,

religious discourses of mourning and melancholy. These discourses label feminine grief as excessive, immoderate, and irrational – characteristics that by consequence are regarded as ‘pathological’ and melancholic. Therefore, the literary space in which women poets worked out their experiences of loss, mourning, and melancholy were discursively anticipated and accepted, since they related in their alleged excess and immoderateness to cultural constructions of feminine grief.

To support this view, I will turn to the eighteenth-century discourses of religious melancholy as a contemporary example of the discourses influencing the literary space for the ‘female’ elegy. This discussion will demonstrate how permeable eighteenth-century boundaries between mourning and melancholy were. Moreover, it will further delineate the changing perception of women as melancholics and the process of melancholy’s increasing feminization.

Religious Melancholy and Feminine Grief

By the early eighteenth century, the idea of enthusiasm as a severe mental disorder with physical origin, and religious melancholy as a mixed disorder of physical and spiritual constituents was well accepted⁷⁰² – and intentionally diffused, as discussed in

subsequently, diagnosed as melancholy (see 77f. and 103). For example, MacDonald demonstrates in the context of the loss of the marital partner: “[...] [A]lmost one-third of the episodes of illness, despair, or madness among Napier’s patients were triggered by the death of the spouse. Of these 42 tormented survivors, 33 were women” (103). Similar figures are to be found with respect to child-loss (see 78). MacDonald’s study clearly proves that, from a medical point of view, grief and melancholy were to be understood as separate entities – however also related if excessive. Moreover, and unsurprisingly in view of the often debated lack of emotional control, women, after all, were tormented above average by the pathological consequences of excessive grief and sorrow. Jackson summarises the paradoxical state in which the cardinal symptom is at the same time its precipitating cause: “the grief or sorrow provoked by the loss of loved ones characteristically led to a dejected state of some seriousness; but this was not conceived of as abnormal, and, after a period of mourning, it usually passed. On the other hand, a large number of such cases continued at such length or to such a level of intensity that mental derangement ensued, and a diagnosis of melancholia was made. Thus, although melancholia commonly occurred in association with unprovoked sorrow, it could also stem from a disproportionate response to the death of loved ones. Grief and mourning were clearly recognized as distinct from melancholia, and yet there was a possible intimate relationship” (318).

⁷⁰² The term “religious melancholy” is usually ascribed to Robert Burton. As recent criticism has pointed out, Burton’s originality lies “in the conjoining of the two terms [i.e. love and religious melancholy, S.B.]” rather than in the ‘invention’ of the concept as such (Lund (2010), p. 118). Although Burton (1621/2001) at first defines religious melancholy as a subspecies of love melancholy – wherein the love to God is either excessive or defective (see part. III, p. 319) –, he generally considers it a mixed disorder of physical as well as spiritual elements. By combining medical and spiritual explanations, causes, and cures, he significantly shapes the notion of religious melancholy, which was, from then onwards, understood as a serious affliction of body and soul. More importantly, Burton argued that religious melancholy and its numerous manifestations, such as religious zeal, superstition, divine revelation, fanaticism, enthusiasm, religious despair (over sins and grace), blasphemy, and atheism, were not only symptoms of melancholy, but actually caused by melancholy, i.e. the surplus of black bile (see part. III, p. 343). The rationale of the naturalisation and medicalisation of highly emotional religious experiences had further reaching implications for the fervent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century controversies over religion, and especially in the critique of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm, which

the biographical accounts of Elizabeth Singer Rowe, for example.⁷⁵³ The mixed symptoms of religious melancholy, such as feelings of worthlessness and guilt, self-destructive behaviour, listlessness, and the agony over salvation and redemption⁷⁵⁴ required both the treatment of its physical side through medical-pharmacological remedies administered by a physician, as well as treatment of its spiritual side through specific counselling, consolatory literature, and the management of the melancholic passions such as grief by a minister.⁷⁵⁵

The nonconformist minister and pastoral writer Richard Baxter's (1615-1691) influential religious treatise *Preservatives against Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow* (1713) is a case in point.⁷⁵⁶ Like Burton a sufferer of melancholy himself, Baxter offered both spiritual advice as well as medical remedies against melancholy.⁷⁵⁷ Moreover,

according to Burton's differentiation belonged to excessive love to God, was a thoroughly pejorative term in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was commonly ascribed to religious groups such as Puritans, Calvinists and Roman Catholics as well as individuals who claimed or were thought to have divine revelations and supernatural inspirations as well as prophetic and poetic frenzies (see Heyd ("Medical Discourse", 1995), p. 134). Through the conceptualisation of a physically induced religious melancholy, enthusiasts were now seen "splenetic sufferers, and their erratic behaviour and religious delusions were explained as the inevitable consequence of melancholic vapors" (Sena (1973), p. 294). Hence, the diagnosis of religious melancholy (and madness) provided a political and social tool by the established Church in post-Reformation England. The explanation pattern of religious experience through medical theories prevailed during the Civil Wars and the Restoration into the eighteenth century. Medical explanations of religious melancholy updated to current medical changes and appear to be firmly rooted in nervous paradigms at the beginning of the eighteenth century (see Heyd ("Medical Discourse", 1995) and his study "Be sober and Reasonable". *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century*, 1995).

For an introduction to the medical and philosophical background of enthusiasm before Burton, see Michael Heyd's "Robert Burton's Sources on Enthusiasm and Melancholy: From a medical Tradition to religious Controversy" (1984). Recently, the monographs of Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy. Robert Burton in Context* (2006), and Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern. Reading The Anatomy of Melancholy* (2010), offer new perspectives and insights with regard to Burton's influential treatise and religious melancholy. For a more detailed discussion of religious melancholy as a political and social tool, see Heyd (1984). See also Lund (2010), p. 127. For the discussion of eighteenth-century religious melancholy and pietism, see Schings (1977), pp. 73-96. Schings also provides a comparative discussion of Eric Casaubon's *Treatise concerning Enthusiasm* (1655) and Henry More's *Enthusiasmus triumphatus* (1656) which – together with Shaftesbury's "A Letter concerning Enthusiasm" (wr. 1707) – significantly shaped the debate of the dangers of religious enthusiasm and melancholy in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England (see 156-165).

⁷⁵³ For Singer Rowe and religious melancholy, see above chap. 3.2, p. 135.

⁷⁵⁴ See Walker and O'Connell (2012), pp. xiv-xv.

⁷⁵⁵ See Schmidt (2007), p. 2. Recently, the historian Jeremy Schmidt has closely examined seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century therapeutic practices and approaches to melancholy which were deeply informed by ancient moral philosophical and patristic theological writings. His erudite study *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul* (2007) provides a thorough discussion of treatment of melancholy beyond medicine and also covers the great shift of melancholy and religion after the Restoration.

⁷⁵⁶ The treatise was first published posthumously in 1713. For more information of its publication history, see Lund (2010), p. 124 FN 38.

⁷⁵⁷ A blend that was rather unusual for the time, according to Lund (2010), p. 125. Lund further provides a short, but useful comparison between Burton's and Baxter's approach to religious melancholy, since it highlights the continuity of particular elements of the discourse before and after the Civil Wars and the Restoration (see 124f.).

Baxter's treatise was one of the first to regard women as particularly prone to excessive sorrow, grief, and melancholy.

In keeping with his medical and theological predecessors, Baxter considers melancholy both a cause and a result of "*overmuch Sorrow*." He believes excessive sorrow to be a sin. By "*overmuch Sorrow*", Baxter refers to sorrow that is engendered by "a mistaken Cause" and which, in turn, causes inappropriate 'sorrowing'.⁷⁵⁸ Moreover, sorrow is too excessive when it destroys physical and mental health and finally, "would swallow up *Faith* it self."⁷⁵⁹ Ultimately, too much sorrowing destroys one of the cardinal virtues: hope. And with hope goes the faith in the promises of mercy and grace, and leaves the afflicted person in deep religious despair: "But Melancholy, overwhelming Sorrow and Trouble, is as great an Adversary to that *Hope*, as water is to fire, or snow to heat. Despair is its very pulse and breath."⁷⁶⁰

The causes for excessive sorrow are closely related to both melancholy and sin. Whereas sickness in general offers a likely cause for sorrow, it is especially the "*natural passionateness and weakness of that reason that should quiet passion*", as well as melancholy that form main causes for "*overmuch sorrow*".⁷⁶¹ Hence, the mismanagement of passions provides the psychological basis for excessive sorrowing in the first place. Yet, the "secret Root or Cause" of religious sorrow, despair, and melancholy ultimately lies in a sinful worldly sorrow or "*too much Love to the Body, and this World*."⁷⁶² This argument of worldly sorrow versus godly sorrow, which Baxter here implies, goes back to early Christian and medieval notions of sinful sadness and sloth (*acedia*). In 2 Corinthians 7:10 Paul states: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." This bible passage carries great importance: Firstly, Paul distinguishes between *tristitia secundum Deum* or *tristitia utilis / salutaris* and *tristitia saeculi* or *tristitia mortifera*. Whereas the first denotes a sorrow agreeable to God, since it manifests itself in repentance, the second implies a self-centred sorrow over the malignity of sin, which ultimately impedes true faith and submission to God.⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁸ Baxter (1713), p. 7.

⁷⁵⁹ Baxter (1713), p.10.

⁷⁶⁰ Baxter (1713), p. 11. In this context, Mary Ann Lund has convincingly pointed out that Baxter makes "no distinction [...] between the body disease melancholy and sorrow, which are grammatically united here by a single verb" (2010, p. 124). The loss of hope further demonstrates the sinfulness of this particular state of mind, since it falsifies Christian duties and practices such as thankfulness, faith in the goodness of God or prayer and renders them insincere (see Baxter (1713), pp. 12-16).

⁷⁶¹ Baxter (1713), p. 16 and 17f. (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁶² Baxter (1713), p. 31.

⁷⁶³ See Obermüller (1974), p. 16.

Secondly, this subtle distinction describes the generally underlying paradox of religious melancholy: on the one hand, feelings of melancholy and sadness are useful and important as they point towards “godly sorrow” and engender a “cultivation of humility”⁷⁶⁴ and repentance. On the other hand, the feelings of humility and repentance were “precisely the kind of spiritual exercise[s] which tended to generate despair in the soul, and reminded the sinner of the enormous properly unforgivable burden of his sins.”⁷⁶⁵ The problem therefore lies, again, in the right balance, with regard to the passions as much as to sorrow and melancholy. This also becomes apparent in Baxter’s discussion of grief and its relation to sorrow/melancholy. Besides the greatly overlapping connotations of grief and sorrow, e.g. the shared implication “of sadness, of mental distress or suffering, particularly that of a dejected state in response to loss,”⁷⁶⁶ the position of grief is quite pronounced in his text. For one thing, “grief” often appears in key passages as the only passion that Baxter explicitly refers to. For instance, he emphasises grief at strategically important points and claims that the “Passion of Grief [...] oft overthrow[s] the sober and sound use of *Reason*”, which leads to the swallowing up of the sinner by sorrow. Consequently, all judgments distorted by such grief are “perverted, and usually false.”⁷⁶⁷ Other examples clearly refer to the sinful nature of inordinate grief, and so demonstrate the power of grief and significance in terms of sorrow and melancholy: “Passionate Grief serveth to *feel* somewhat contrary to the Grace and Promises of the Gospel; and that *feeling* hinders *Faith*.”⁷⁶⁸

Without doubt, one of the most important examples of Baxter’s strategic use of grief is when he describes worldly sorrow as the excessive love of the body and the world. Again, the question of balance and moderateness is paramount: “Were nothing *over-loved*, it would have no Power to torment us; if *Ease* and *Health* were not *over-loved*, *Pain* and *Sickness* would be more tolerable; if *Children* and *Friends* were not *over-loved*, the *Death* of them would not overwhelm us with inordinate sorrow.”⁷⁶⁹ Until the end, Baxter’s text asks the question how much sorrow, melancholy, and grief are agreeable to God and useful in a Christian’s life. Quite tellingly, he closes his treatise

⁷⁶⁴ Schmidt (2007), p. 185.

⁷⁶⁵ Schmidt (2007), p. 52.

⁷⁶⁶ Jackson (1986), p. 311.

⁷⁶⁷ Baxter (1713), p. 10.

⁷⁶⁸ Baxter (1713), p. 10f. (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁶⁹ Baxter (1713), p. 31 (emphasis in the original). In the latter part of the treatise, which predominantly discusses various spiritual and physical treatments of sorrow and melancholy, he advises his readers: “Prepare for the loss of Children and Friends, for the loss of Goods, and for Poverty and Want; [...], for Sickness, Pain and Death: It is your Unpreparedness that maketh it seem Unsufferable” (41).

by both highlighting grief as the paradoxical experience of holy joy through the experience of sorrow, as well as reaffirming the significance of grief in his system of sorrow and melancholy:

*But Christ saith to his Mourners, Mat. 5.4. Blessed are you that mourn, for you shall be comforted. And John 16.20. Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. And Salomon knew that the house of mourning was better than the house of feasting. And that the heart of the wise is in the house of the mourning, but the heart of the fools in the house of mirth. Eccl. 7.2,3,4. But holy joy of Faith and Hope is best of all.*⁷⁷⁰

Baxter's text is also important in terms of gender and religious melancholy.⁷⁷¹ Although the discourse on religious melancholy "seldom make[s] any distinction between men's and women's experiences" of the melancholic afflictions of the conscience,⁷⁷² Baxter appears to have been the first to stress the gendering of religious melancholy and to clearly identify it with women.⁷⁷³

Baxter's rationale that women are prone to excessive worldly sorrow rests on the conviction that they are unable to control their passions (incl. grief), owing to 'naturally' weak reasoning. In accordance with contemporary medical and social constructions of feminine immoderateness, he attests that the proclivity to passions

[...] is most troublesome and hurtful in too many *Women* (and some *Men*) who are too easily troubled and hardly quieted, that they have very little power on themselves, even many that fear God, and that have very sound Understandings and quick Wits, have almost no power against troubling Passions, Anger and Grief, but especially Fear, than they have of any other Persons.⁷⁷⁴

From this alleged natural inclination to exuberant passion in combination with weak reasoning capacity, the step to excessive sorrow and, finally, religious melancholy is not far. In this context, Schmidt observes that Baxter not only "aligns [women's] natural constitution with melancholic diseases," but that the minister's views on the

⁷⁷⁰ Baxter (1713), p. 96 (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁷¹ For the importance of religious melancholy in the gendering of eighteenth-century melancholy, see Clark Lawlor's discussion of Richardson's heroine Clarissa, as both a sufferer of religious melancholy and an epitome of the new melancholic femininity in his article "'Long Grief, dark Melancholy, hopeless natural Love': Clarissa, Cheyne and Narratives of Body and Soul" (2006).

⁷⁷² Hodgkin (2007), p. 84. Burton's discussion of religious melancholy as the last part of his *Anatomy* also shows that this particular type is comparably 'gender-unspecific,' i.e. both men and women suffer alike from religious melancholy. Other texts such as Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563) explicitly refer to women as religious melancholics and instrumentalise the disorder in order to exonerate women from accusations of witchcraft. For an excellent introduction to the Dutch physician work, see George Mora's introduction to "Weyer's Work and Life" in Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance. Johann Weyer, De praestigiis daemonum* (1991), pp. xxvii-lxxxvii.

⁷⁷³ See Schmidt (2007), p. 117.

⁷⁷⁴ Baxter (1713), p. 16f. Consistent with his predecessors and contemporaries such as Burton as well as Sydenham, Baxter identifies idleness in women as another major cause for bouts of melancholy. He states: "Whereas in *London* and great Towns, abundance of *Women* that never sweat with bodily Work, but live in idleness (especially when from fulness they fall into Want) are miserable Objects, continually vexed and near Distraction with Discontent and a restless Mind" (75f.; emphasis in the original).

concept of female religious melancholy are to be read in the wider context of the critique on nonconformist female piety.⁷⁷⁵

Baxter's reasoning in terms of female melancholy as a phenomenon of "female weakness, irrationality, and the consequent sin of excessive worldly passion,"⁷⁷⁶ is conventional for his time. In tune with the dominant voices of the social and medical constructions of feminine mourning, his treatise is representative of its genre, and delivers significant insights into the social and cultural expectations of grieving women. These expectations of mourning women as irrational, excessive, and melancholic, in turn, shape the literary space that the 'female' elegy occupies with its generic resistance to consolation. Again, this is not an act of social and cultural transgression, but actually corresponds to the expectations of feminine behaviour in times of grief, as formulated by Baxter. Hence, the literary experimentation with melancholy in the 'female' elegy takes place in this newly created literary space that was prepared within predetermined discursive structures. This by no means disparages female literary melancholic writing. On the contrary, it shows that women writers created and used new literary spaces that did not challenge their social standing or reputation, but enhanced their literary and cultural possibilities to create poetic-melancholic selves beyond prototypical melancholic subjectivities. Moreover, these self-constructions were not created from the experience of *either* grief *or* melancholy, but by oscillating *between* mourning and melancholy, thereby creating new forms of a literary melancholic femininity.

4.2 Melancholic Mourning: Loss as a Female Melancholic-Poetic Experience

The wavering between mourning and melancholy is captured by Ramazani's concept of "melancholic mourning."⁷⁷⁷ Despite obvious differences in the material and theoretical approach,⁷⁷⁸ I will adapt and modify Ramazani's 'melancholic mourning' for my readings of early eighteenth-century female-authored elegies. This will enable

⁷⁷⁵ Schmidt (2007), p. 117.

⁷⁷⁶ Schmidt (2007), p. 117.

⁷⁷⁷ See Jahan Ramazani's study *Poetry of Mourning* (1994). In this context, also see Spargo's study *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature* (2004). Here, Spargo not only considers melancholy the sign of the mourner's social and cultural alienation, but also an "ethical concern for the other elaborated by the mourner's objections to the cultural practices presiding over grief (11). He thus understands melancholy "as the elegy's most persistent sign of dissent from conventional meanings and as its similarly persistent sign of a dedication to the time and realm of the other" (11). Fundamentally, Spargo attributes "ethical meaning" to elegy's melancholic resistance to consolation (13).

⁷⁷⁸ Ramazani uses a fundamentally psychoanalytical approach in studying the modern English and American elegy.

the analysis of mourning *and* melancholy beyond pre-set expectations of gender performance and female elegiac writing.⁷⁷⁹

Originally introduced as an alternative to Sacks's notion of elegy as 'successful' mourning, Ramazani strongly argues against a consolatory approach, emphasising the modern elegy's inherently prolonged and unresolved mourning. Through 'melancholic mourning', Ramazani recasts "the classical distinction between mourning and melancholia, shading it as a difference between modes of mourning: The normative (i.e. restitutive, idealizing) and the melancholic (violent, recalcitrant)."⁷⁸⁰ 'Melancholic mourning' defines a sustained experience of grief that "is unresolved, violent, and ambivalent."⁷⁸¹ Based on the assumption that the modern elegy is fundamentally "anti-elegiac (in generic terms) and melancholic (in psychological terms)," ⁷⁸² he not only stresses the genre's defiance of traditional formulae of consolation, but also emphasises the poems' virulent tendency to prolong the ambivalent experience of loss and grief without end, in order "not to override but to sustain anger, not to heal but to reopen the wounds of loss."⁷⁸³ The allusion to Freud's metaphor of melancholy as 'an open wound' is, of course, intentional. Similar to Freud's notion of melancholy, Ramazani conceptualises 'melancholic mourning' as resistant to the transcendence of the dead, the consolation of the living, and as self-critical (even reproachful) of the elegist him- or herself.⁷⁸⁴

Ramazani's concept can be applied to early elegies as "the genre's perennial dialectic between 'successful' and melancholic mourning," and is already noticeable in the seventeenth century.⁷⁸⁵ Being fundamentally anti-consolatory, 'melancholic mourning' touches upon the most salient features of the 'female' elegy: unresolved grieving, mourning of specific losses, as well as the poetic expression of violent and

⁷⁷⁹ Both Phillippy (2002, see p. 156) and Backscheider (2008, see p. 315) refer to Ramazani's concept as a suitable tool, but do not apply it to their readings.

⁷⁸⁰ See Ramazani (1994), p. xi.

⁷⁸¹ Ramazani (1994), p. 4.

⁷⁸² Ramazani (1994), p. xi.

⁷⁸³ Ramazani (1994), p. xi.

⁷⁸⁴ See Ramazani (1994), p. 4. According to Ramazani, modern elegists attack the dead and themselves, their work and their tradition without any hope and wish for transcendence, but immersing themselves in their grief: "Sometimes punishing themselves, thereby avenging the dead and deflecting hostility inward, at other times modern elegists turn their rage outward, attacking and debasing the dead. Suffusing the elegy with melancholic anger and ambivalence, they slacken its traditional ties with love poetry and encomium" (5).

⁷⁸⁵ Ramazani (1994), p. 10.

ambivalent feelings of grief and melancholy.⁷⁸⁶ Ramazani's concept thus corroborates further differentiations of eighteenth-century female melancholy poetry. It appears as a rather dynamic concept that "should be regarded as matters of degree and not of kind,"⁷⁸⁷ and which enables us to read early eighteenth-century elegies by women writers for what they are: as mixed forms of an expression of grief and melancholy, as attempts at different forms of poetic self-constructions through the fundamental experience of melancholy, loss, and grief.

As will be discussed in the following analyses of selected 'female' elegies, it is not only mourning and melancholy that characterises the construction of the poetic selves, but the question of the moral and social appropriateness of the intensity and duration of their grief, as well as the social relations of the poems' speakers. These poetic-melancholic selves differ from those in chapter three and form a second 'type' of self-representation prevalent in this study. Here, the construction of the self works through two interrelated constituents: the experience of loss, mourning, and melancholy as well as the social position, ties, and relations of the poems' speakers. Thus, they are 'relational-melancholic' insofar as they are significantly determined by social, moral, and cultural norms with roles as mothers, daughters, and friends.⁷⁸⁸ The experience of mourning and melancholy both adds to this self-understanding and endangers the social relation and position of the self by the experience of loss. Relational-melancholic selves present a double subject structure: as melancholic poet as well as grievous mother, daughter, or friend mourning their personal dead, the public dead, the loss of life – and the loss of their selves.

In this way, these examples of poetic-melancholic selves, in which the speakers' social position and relations often still adumbrates the emotional, introspective, and interior processes of their poetic selves, are regarded as significant constituents of the new melancholic femininity.

⁷⁸⁶ Ramazani's idea of 'melancholic mourning' is not overtly gendered or an essentialist model of male or female elegiac writing. As his selection of elegiac poetry underlines, 'melancholic mourning' is used for both male and female writers alike.

⁷⁸⁷ Ramazani (1994), p. 86.

⁷⁸⁸ The term "relational self" has also been used in other contexts. For instance, Anne Mellor uses it for a description of Dorothy Wordsworth's literary self and in contrast to the "masculine Romantic self" (see Anne Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender*. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 168). Other feminist critics refer to Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytical meaning of the relational self, see Nancy Chodorow, "On the Reproduction of Mothering. A Methodological Debate." *Signs* 6 (1981): 500-514.

“I’m tir’d with Life, and over-charg’d with Woe”: Mary Chudleigh’s Elegies

“Life is what I have for many years had
no reason to be fond of, and a grave has
appeared to me the happiest and best Asylum.”⁷⁸⁹

Chudleigh’s elegies demonstrate various ways in which female poetic selves are characterised by their experience of extensive grief and melancholy in combination with their social roles as national subject, mother, daughter, and friend. They play with different notions of eighteenth-century melancholy and of elegiac writing, thus presenting literary blends of pastoral, public, and private elegies as well as friendship poetry. Among the most pressing underlying questions in the following three elegies are, firstly, whether the intensity of melancholic mourning experienced is still within the bounds of reason and thus compatible with contemporary ideas of female conduct, morality, and health and secondly, which aspects of the poetic selves have to be emphasised in order to express immeasurable grief and melancholy.⁷⁹⁰

Mary, Lady Chudleigh (bapt. 1656-1710) was the eldest child of Richard Lee and Mary Sydenham (“Phillinda”), a niece of Dr Thomas Sydenham.⁷⁹¹ Especially the maternal connection to the “illustrious Sydenham family” provided Mary Chudleigh with “a network of intellectually inclined relatives [...] who appear to have shared the engagement with issues of natural history and metaphysics which Chudleigh displays so confidently in her own writings.”⁷⁹²

Little is known about Chudleigh’s education. George Ballard (1752) later represents her as a learned lady “of great virtue as well as great understanding.”⁷⁹³ In 1674, she married Sir George Chudleigh, with whom she had six children, two of whom survived into adulthood. The death of her children and her secluded life in rural England usually invite the readings of her works to be interpreted against the background of her biography.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁹ Chudleigh qtd. in Gwinnett (1731), p. 254. In her letter to her fellow poet Elizabeth Thomas, Mary Chudleigh elaborates on her stoical acceptance of her long bouts of sickness, and her yearnings for her “solitary Recess” and life between “Thoughts and Books” (254). For the letter, see also Lonsdale (1989), p. 1.

⁷⁹⁰ Mellor (2010) considers Chudleigh’s elegies seminal as they were a “brilliant representation of the emotional continuum upon which other female elegists map the work of grieving” (447).

⁷⁹¹ The following information, unless otherwise stated, is taken from Margaret Ezell’s biographical account of Mary Chudleigh as part of her introduction to *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh* (1993).

⁷⁹² Ezell (1993), p. xix.

⁷⁹³ Ballard (1752), p. 409f.

⁷⁹⁴ See Ezell (1993), p. xxi. In *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*, Ezell provides a well-researched and extensive biographical account.

Notwithstanding her secluded life in the country, Chudleigh ("Marissa") participated in different coteries and cultivated a number of literary acquaintances, including with such writers and thinkers as Mary Astell ("Almystrea"), the neoplatonic clergyman and philosopher John Norris, the poet Elizabeth Thomas ("Corinna"), and John Dryden.

In 1701, Chudleigh first published *The Ladies Defence*, which serves as the main constituent of her literary reputation as a proto-feminist and has thus been most discussed by contemporary critics.⁷⁹⁵ Two publications followed before Chudleigh's death in 1710: *Poems on Several Occassions* (1703) and *Essays upon Several Subjects* (1710). Both works received literary recognition beyond the borders of her coterie; her poems enjoyed four editions until 1710 and individual poems were anthologised throughout the eighteenth century.⁷⁹⁶ After her most frequently printed poem "To the Ladies", her elegy on her daughter Eliza Maria figures prominently in contemporary biographical accounts of Chudleigh.

"On the Death of His Highness the Duke of Gloucester" (1703)

Chudleigh's elegy on the death of Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the third and eldest son of Queen Anne, appears as the first poem in *Poems on Several Occasions*.⁷⁹⁷ "On the Death of His Highness the Duke of Gloucester" is a public elegy – a subtype that made up only a small part of the elegiac writings of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers.⁷⁹⁸ The elegy presents itself as a neoclassical combination of occasional poetry, the panegyric, maternal elegy, retirement, as well as narrative poetry.⁷⁹⁹ Accordingly, the poem varies in its formal setup and presents 16 stanzas of irregular length in iambic pentameter and a highly irregular mix of rhymes that consist predominantly of cross rhymes, couplets, and triplets. The poem displays various forms of melancholy and mourning and challenges generic notions

⁷⁹⁵ Rebecca Mills (2003) still provides the most comprehensive bibliography of secondary sources about Mary Chudleigh and her works, see p. 58f.

⁷⁹⁶ See Ezell (1993), pp. xxxi-xxxiv.

⁷⁹⁷ Since the entire volume is dedicated "To the Queen's [i.e. Anne, S.B.] Most Excellent Majesty" (Chudleigh 1703/1993), p. 43), it does not come as a surprise that Chudleigh chose this poem as an opening. "On the Death of His Highness the Duke of Gloucester" is one of three poems in this volume that more or less explicitly deals with the political agenda and above all the legitimacy of Queen Anne's reign. As Barbara Olive (2002) points out, by establishing the Queen's legitimacy Chudleigh also legitimises herself as a writer as was not uncommon for the time (see 475 and 483). This observation certainly also counts true for Chudleigh's elegy on Anne's son as will be discussed below.

⁷⁹⁸ See Lilley (1992), p. 81. Other examples are, for instance, Anne Wharton's and Aphra Behn's respective elegies on John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester in 1684/85, and Anne Finch's highly melancholic elegy "On the Death of the Queen" (ca. 1718).

⁷⁹⁹ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 290.

of the elegy. The core narrative of the death of the young prince, as well as the subsequent public (i.e. national) and private (i.e. individual) acts of mourning are rendered by a melancholic female poet-speaker who shifts from a mere observer to a maternal sympathiser in an act of individualisation in the course of the poem.

The gravity of the prince's death becomes evident regarding the historical context, and explains the poem's manifest national momentum.⁸⁰⁰ With the death of Princess Anne's son a serious succession crisis ensued, which led to the Act of Settlement in 1701 by which Sophia of Hanover became heiress to the throne. Chudleigh's highly political elegy reflects upon this national crisis in two different ways: firstly, through the speaker's role as a national citizen and thus as a part of the mourning English people; secondly, *via* her sympathy with Queen Anne as the orphaned mother.⁸⁰¹ In both senses (national and private), she is deeply imbued by the experiences of mourning and melancholy, which characterise the speaker's poetic-melancholic as well as maternal self-constitution.

The poem sets off in a melancholy manner: announcing her retirement from "business, Noise and Care" (l. 1), as the speaker marks the poem as part of retirement poetry – a well-established genre of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry –⁸⁰² and generally meditates upon the unsteadiness of life, expressed through the conventional metaphor of life as a "stormy Sea" (l. 2).⁸⁰³ Staying within this metaphorical frame, her thoughts revolve around her own helplessness regarding the turmoils of life, always painfully aware that only the afterlife ("the Shore") will bring the desired rest:

⁸⁰⁰ The birth of Prince William Henry in 1689 was a crucial event for the British monarchy. After Princess Anne had lost two daughters and had suffered several miscarriages, the birth of a son was presented "as an endorsement by providence of the revolution of 1688" and provided the protestant branch of the Royal family with an heir "to counterbalance the Catholic James Francis Edward, infant son of the exiled James II and thus also Gloucester's uncle" (Kilburn, 'William, Prince, duke of Gloucester (1689–1700)', *Oxford DNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29454>; last visit 5 Dec. 2012). Yet, William Henry was of ill health (See Gregg (2001), p. 76). Suffering from convulsions, he remained physically frail and handicapped in walking (See Kilburn). After a brief period of apparent good health, he was gradually prepared to take a larger role in public life as the future heir to the throne. In July 1700, however, Prince William fell ill with suspected small pox and died.

⁸⁰¹ By "sympathy" I explicitly refer to the eighteenth-century meanings of the term, which are closely related to the moral-philosophical debates of sentimentalism. It denotes an emotional as well as cognitive understandings and experiencing which diffuses the borders between one's self and the other and leads to strong identifications with the 'suffering' other. (see Schwalm (2007, p. 24). For a detailed discussion of eighteenth-century 'sympathy' in the philosophical and literary context, see Schwalm (2007), pp. 24–26.

⁸⁰² See Reed (1924), p. 38.

⁸⁰³ All following line numbers refer to Chudleigh (1703/1993), pp. 47–59.

I've often sighing look'd towards the Shore:
 And when the boisterous Winds did cease,
 And all was calm and all was Peace,
 Afraid of Calms, and flatt'ring Skies,
 On the deceitful Waves I fixt my Eyes,
 And on a sudden saw the threatening Billows rise [...] (ll. 4-9)

In this situation, the persona turns to her muses ("Pow'rs Divine", l. 10) and urges them for "Some little safe Retreat" (l. 11). Withdrawing herself from society, the speaker longs for a *vita contemplativa*, giving her "time to nobler Use [...] / And to my Books, my Thoughts entirely live" (ll. 24-5). This retirement appears like "Ten thousand Joys to feast my Mind, / Joys, great as Sense can bear, from all its Dross refin'd" (ll. 27-8). The use of "Dross" seems particularly notable in this context: generally referring to "Dreggy, impure, or foreign matter, mixed with any substance, and detracting from its purity,"⁸⁰⁴ the association between dross and black bile is unmistakable. The persona, however, presents the joys of contemplation as pure and elevated – free of dross and, hence, free of debilitating forms of melancholy.

The muse *Poesie* (see l. 72) leads the speaker "to the Shades she lov'd" (l. 30), and introduces her to a pastoral setting (see ll. 31-32) that not only recalls features of the Ovidian Golden Age (see ll. 33-35), but also unfolds an entire mythologized, idealised world of gods, swains, and nymphs in the tradition of the pastoral elegy. The imagined pastoral landscape mirrors the speaker's inner or psychic landscape. This relates only in parts to her former state of existence.⁸⁰⁵ Characterised by friendship and innocence, the inhabitants of this pastoral place – gods, swains, and nymphs – are united in their "mutual Joys" of the arts, especially poetry: "While on their tuneful Reeds their Poets play'd / And their chast Loves to future Times convey'd" (ll. 42-43).

The expression of the persona's inner state of being in the pastoral landscape of the poem is further underlined through the opening lines of stanza three: "Cool was the place, and quiet as my Mind, / The Sun cou'd there no Entrance find: / No ruffling Winds the Boughs did move" (ll. 44-46). The peace and quiet of the imagined space

⁸⁰⁴ "dross, *n.*" OED online. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/57919?rskey=g7fWL1&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>; last visit 5 Dec. 2012.

⁸⁰⁵ The relation between former state and pastoral inner landscape is underlined by the parallel sentence construction of l. 6 ("And all was still, and all was Peace") and l. 35 ("And all were just, and all were kind"), which emphasises the similarity of the external and internal landscapes of the speaker and, at the same time, demonstrates their dissimilarities. Whereas the former state of existence appears as highly changeable – the allegedly positive attributes mentioned in l. 6 refer only to short episodes between the different storms of life – and its inhabitants described as greedy, ambitious, and morally compromised individuals (see l. 16, 20), the speaker's inner world is still in its "Infant State" (l. 33).

remains undisturbed by wind and water (see the reference to the life-as-a-storm-metaphor in stanza one). The general atmosphere of the twilight scenery resembles the beguiling melancholic mood of Milton's *Il Penseroso*. This impression is reinforced by the soft music the speaker believes she can hear (see ll. 49-50), as well as by the allusion to the harmonious, but sad music by *Philomela*,⁸⁰⁶ who also prominently features in Milton's melancholic prototype and who triggers the poetic raptures of the speaker:

Sad *Philomela* sung her Pains,
Expressed her Wrongs, and her Despair;
I listen'd to her mournful Song,
The charming Warbler pleas'd,
And I, me thought, with new Delight was seiz'd:
Her Voice with tender'st Passions fill'd my Breast,
And I felt Raptures not to be express'd; (ll. 51-57)

These raptures lead to an imagined transcendental experience in which the speaker imagines her soul leaving her body and the world behind (see ll. 59-60). The speaker fully commits herself to the muse, and refrains from what she considers worldly vanities (see ll. 61-64). Through this, the persona is now at a point of complete social disengagement, but unified with her muse and her imagined inner pastoral idyll: "From this dear Solitude no more remove, / But here confine my Joy, my Hope, my Love" (ll. 67-68).

With the end of the third stanza, the persona has entirely retired into herself, spending time in poetic "Extasies" (l. 69) and the "secret Sweets of Life" (l. 70). However, these "Sweets" are by no means as positively connoted as they appear at first. They become increasingly ambiguous and foreshadow an inevitable change of situation. Although the speaker's muse is presented as a mental refuge for the poet, *Poesie* also keeps the persona "[i]nslav'd" by her powers. Like melancholy, poetry is a bitter-sweet phenomenon to which the speaker is as much drawn as imprisoned. The poem expresses this ambivalence through words such as "inslaved", "Fetters", and the highly ambivalent usage of "flatt'ring" with its inherent undertone of insincerity:

Serene, and calm, from every Pressure free,
Inslav'd alone by flatt'ring Poesie:
But Oh! how pleasing did her Fetters prove!
How much did I, th'endearing Charmer Love! (ll. 71-74; my emphasis)

The same counts true for the poet-speaker's descriptions of her carefree and unmolested (see l. 75) state, which are not without ambivalent undertones: "All was forgot, as if in *Lethe's* Stream / I'd quench my Thirst, the past was all a Dream" (ll.

⁸⁰⁶ For *Philomela*, see also chap. 3.2, p. 140.

77-78). The speaker realises the potential dangers of erasing her memories of her former life and self. The reference to Lethe, the Greek goddess of the underworld river of oblivion, represents this danger of losing her memories as well as her self and implicitly suggests that the speaker's alleged dream might be about death itself. Moreover, with the introduction of Lethe, the transition to the poem's central issue slowly begins: the death of the Duke of Gloucester.

Thus, the "Turn of Fate" is expected (l. 80), as announced by a "hollow melancholy Sound" (l. 81). Within an instant, the carefully constructed pastoral atmosphere of serenity and calmness converts to an atmosphere of terror and fear. If melancholy has shown its inspiring, serene, and contemplative face so far, the downsides now become visible through the sudden transformation that collides with the sweetly melancholy world of the speaker. Up to this point, the poetic mood was characterised as soft, pensive, and dusky, but now it presents its other side: bleakness, sinister silence and sudden darkness. The soundscape reinforces the suddenness of the change as the speaker is trapped in a paradoxical state of utter noise and complete silence. As the "frighted Birds with hast their Boughs forsake / And for securer Seats to distant Groves repair" (ll. 90-91), even the "much wrong'd" Philomela (l. 92) ceases to deplore "Her former Injuries [...]; / Forgot were all her moving Strains / Forgot each sweet melodious Air" (ll. 93-95) and her otherwise dominant passion grief now "surrendered to her Fear" (l. 96).

The terror and gloom first felt by the inhabitants of the speaker's pastoral world now take hold of the persona herself, depriving her of the former joys and contemplation. "[S]eiz'd with an unusual dread" (l. 99), the persona is surrounded by frightful objects and starts to experience the 'other' side of her ambivalent melancholic-poetic inspiration: the paralysis through black melancholy.

Amaz'd I sat, deprived of all Delight,
The Muse was fled, fled ev'ry pleasing Thought,
and in their Room were black Ideas brought,
By busie Fear, and active Fancy wrought (ll. 103-106).

These lines clearly capture decisive melancholic markers, but without directly referring to the popular phenomenon. With the cause still unknown, the speaker feels "amaz'd"⁸⁰⁷ and void of all happiness, or "all Delight." The paralysis of poetic inspiration and the substitution of "pleasing" thoughts by melancholic, "black Ideas"

⁸⁰⁷ Here in its now obsolete meaning "Driven stupid; stunned or stupefied, as by a blow; out of one's wits;" "amazed, *adj.*", *OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6067?redirectedFrom=amazed#eid>; last visit 6 Dec. 2012.

are notably located “in their Room”, which might well allude to contemporary notions of the brain (and its various ventricles) as well as to the construction of melancholy by fear and an (over-)active imagination (here “Fancy”) (see l. 106).

The actual elegiac part of the poem commences with the appearance of “the British Genius” (l. 108), i.e. John Dryden,⁸⁸ who is also marked by his melancholic habitus, e.g. his dejected eyes, sighs (here emphasised by the alliteration of “thick thronging”), and tears:

Solemn his Pace,
Dejected were his Eyes,
And from his Breast thick thronging Sighs arise:
The Tears ran down his venerable Face,
And he with Lamentations loud fill'd all the sacred Place. (ll. 109-113)

Dryden's appearance is crucial for the poem's generic development, as well as for the constitution of the speaker's poetic self as melancholic and maternal. Shortly after his death in 1700, Dryden's ubiquitous influence is still palpable. As such, he powerfully represents the English nation in this poem and is considered the right person to announce the premature death of the Duke of Gloucester. While present, Dryden dominates the poem and thus the poetic development of the elegy. As former poet laureate, Dryden knows how to follow the generic pattern of the elegy and laments and praises the deceased as well as consoles the English people. Hence, under Dryden's directive, the elegy plays according to its generic rules. This is an extremely smart move in the poem, since it confirms the knowledge of its generic rules, but subsequently acts against this knowledge by deliberately transgressing the generic conventions. Against Dryden's traditional poetic approach, the original female poet-speaker, who shifts into an observing position in Dryden's presence, constitutes her poetic-melancholic self through her melancholic mourning, defying consolation and relating herself to the maternal mourner, Queen Anne.

Without explicitly mentioning William's name, Dryden immediately starts his lament, “He's Dead he [Dryden, S.B.] cry'd! the young, the much belov'd!” (l. 114), thereby embedding the child within a wide historical and mythological framework of ancient Greek and Roman war heroes like Marcellus (l. 117). At the same time, Dryden also alludes to Maro (see l. 119), i.e. Virgil who, as the first poet of pastoral elegies, epitomises the long-standing, self-aware, male literary tradition of the elegy that both praises and laments the dead, as well as promotes the elegist. Consequently, the text is explicitly positioned within this tradition and consciously

⁸⁸ Chudleigh (1703/1993), p. 50, notes.

draws upon its generic pattern. As a stark contrast to human mortality, Dryden praises the prince's beauty and charm "in never dying Verse" (l. 120). From the very beginning of Dryden's elegy, Prince William Henry is attributed with masculine features, such as reason, strength, and maturity (see ll. 142-148). This is done despite his young age and his public image of a physically unstable prince. His mother, Queen Anne, is used as a contrast figure and first appears in the poem as Dido (see l. 129-132). This contrast is further enhanced and shifts in the course of the poem towards questions of the gendering of mourning with regard to the royal parents.

The deathbed-narrative depicts the dying of the young prince as well as the emotional struggle of the parents, "th'afflicted Royal Pair" (l.153). The entire scene is dominated and structured by a large word-paradigm of watching and observing.⁸⁰⁹ This creates a complex sympathetic bond between the protagonists, and has a melancholizing effect on the reader in order to both inspire sympathy for the afflicted parents, as well as remind the reader of one's own mortality. By addressing God, Dryden introduces the intricate play of watching and observing. He conjures up the image of God beholding (see l. 153) the despairing parents "Stand by that Bed, where the dear Suff'rer lay / To his Disease a helpless Prey" (ll. 154-155) from an aerial perspective. This superior vantage point allows the reader to watch the entire scene from 'above': the parents "gaz[ing]" (l. 156), the life-or-death struggle of their child, "observ[ing]" (l. 158) their "Passions which their Souls did move" (l. 158), following (here "Seen", l. 160) the lifting of their hopes and, finally, "view[ing]" (l. 165) them

in that curst Moment [...],
When by prevailing Death subdu'd,
Breathless and pale, the beauteous Victim lay,
When his unwilling Soul was forc'd away (ll. 165-168).

With this stanza, the paradigm closes and the poem again establishes a more general perspective on the death of the child: "no Age could ever show / A sadder Sight, a Scene of vaster Woe" (ll. 171-172).⁸¹⁰

The sight of the devastated parents provides a transition to the discussion of their particular and highly gendered forms of grief and mourning. Conventionally, this grief is beyond expression, as we are informed at the beginning of stanza nine:

⁸⁰⁹ As will be shown below, Chudleigh uses a similar technique in her elegy "On the Death of my dear Daughter *Eliza Maria Chudleigh*."

⁸¹⁰ Accompanied by the intricate rhymes "doubtful Strife" – "strugling Life" (ll. 156-157) and "joys [...] did strive" – "keep [...] Hopes alive" (ll. 160-161), this passage demonstrates the need to forcefully strive in order to maintain both life and hope.

"Sorrow like theirs, what language can express" (l. 173). However, the inexpressibility of royal grief not only owes itself to the inadequacy of language, but also to the parents' extraordinary social status. Therefore, Dryden alludes to powerful mythological 'role models' in order to represent the degree of the royal mourning and despair, which also takes social norms into account.

Dryden compares Prince George with Aegeus, the mythical king of Athens who killed himself over the mistaken conviction that his son Theseus had been killed. Unlike Aegeus, however, Dryden presents Prince George as more rational,

[...] calmer, more resign'd
And had the stronger, more Majestick Mind:
He knew Complaints could give him no Relief,
And therefore cast a Veil upon his sullen Grief; (ll. 178-182)

Dryden thus presents the Prince as the future king with moral strength, virtue, and manliness. His role as a father is left unmentioned. The Princess' grief, by contrast, clearly displays contemporary notions of feminine grieving. Whereas the prince is already represented as the future monarch – his "Majestick Mind" controls his passions –, the Princess "could not thus controul / The tender Motions of her troubled Soul" (ll. 182-183). Even more, she gives "her Sorrow way / and did the Dictates of her Grief obey" (ll. 184-185). As with the prince before, the social status of the bereaved is interconnected with the visibility of mourning. In Anne's case, however, her maternal status is emphasised by the poem deliberately at the expense of her status as future queen. Anne, so Dryden suggests, loses herself in maternal 'melancholic mourning':

Maternal Kindness still does preference claim,
And always burns with a more ardent Flame:
But sure no Heart was ever thus oppress'd,
The Load is much too great to bear;
In sad Complaints are all her Minutes spent,
And she lives only to lament [...] (ll. 186-191)⁸¹¹

The image of Anne painted by the figure of Dryden's verse is restricted to that of a maternal melancholic mourner, who ruminates over her child's "unexpected Fate" (l. 194) as well as her loss ("And she speaks nothing but her mighty Loss" (l. 195)). Dryden also likens Anne to a mythological figure in order to emphasise both her maternal and grieving status, as well as the union of mother and son. The poem selects Andromache for Anne, who is typically represented as a perfect wife of the

⁸¹¹ In his biography of Queen Anne, Gregg (2001) refers several times to bouts of melancholy and depression which Anne suffered from especially in the context of her several miscarriages and the loss of her children. Moreover, as Gregg demonstrates, Anne was also perceived as melancholic and accordingly treated by her physicians (see 14, 92 and 291).

Trojan warrior Hector and a dedicated mother to her son Astyanax, whom she witnesses being thrown off the city walls of Troja (see ll. 195-199). By analogy, Anne is not only characterised as a 'good' wife and mother, but also as highly grief stricken and melancholic, and therefore close to madness. Numb and devoid of words, Anne is inseparable from Andromache: "Speechless she [i.e Andromache, and hence Anne] gaz'd, and by her Grief impell'd, / Fearless amidst the *Grecian* Troops she run, / And to her panting Bosom clasp'd her mangl'd Son" (ll. 200-202). In this moment of deepest (maternal) despair, Dryden is superseded as a speaker by Britannia and her entourage, which serves as a metonymy of the English nation (see ll. 204-205). Britannia joins in with Dryden's laments and marks the end of his 'elegy-within-the-elegy.'

By repeatedly crying "He's dead! he's dead!" (l. 206, 208), the transition from Dryden to Britannia (and her folk) is completely coherent. Yet as the allegory of England, Britannia's lament for the duke is motivated by her political agenda rather than by an act of sympathy. Given the political consequences of Gloucester's death, i.e. the succession crisis and the end of the Stuart line, Britannia states:

Heav'n would not long the mighty Blessing lend:
Some envious Pow'r, who does my Greatness fear,
Foreseeing if he shou'd to Manhood live
He'd glorious Proof of wondrous Valor give:
To distant Lands extend his Sway,
And teach remotest Nations to obey (ll. 209-214).

This is an important national moment and highlights the political overtones of this poem: Interpreting Gloucester's death in terms of its significance to Britain's political and colonial strength, Britannia's nation seems unified in its loss and its mourning, and also fortified in its political crisis – and therefore ambition. As with Gloucester's birth, his death is strategically used to confirm the nation's political agenda, highlighting the legitimacy of the Stuart line and the hope for a Protestant future in England.⁸¹²

The unifying effect is enhanced by Britannia's entourage (nymphs, swains, and Nereids embodying the English people), joining in unison their leader's lament. This is further supported by a layer of grave o-sounds and anaphoric phrases, which both mirror the deep sadness in the dark sounds and the ritualistic nature of the lament:

⁸¹² See Olive (2002), p. 485. For Chudleigh as a political writer, see Olive (2002), and esp. Barash (1992 and 1996, here pp. 236-246).

In his cold Tomb the lovely Youth is laid,
 And has too soon, alas! too soon the Laws of Fate obey'd.
 No more, no more shall he these Groves adorn,
 No more by him shall flow'ry Wreaths be worn:
 No more, no more we now on him shall gaze,
 No more divert him with our rural Lays,
 Nor see him with a godlike Smile receive our humble Praise. (ll. 220-227)

Stanza ten closes with the vision of Britain unified in grief – a vision which in retrospect almost appears clairvoyant, given the Act of Union in 1707 that would permanently unify the British nation: “All with one Voice the much lov'd Youth lament, / And in pathetic Strains their boundless Sorrow vent” (l. 231).

With stanza eleven, the original female persona regains her speaking position and presents herself as part of the mourning English nation:

Upon the Ground I pensive lay;
 Complain'd and wept as much as they:
 My Country's Loss became my own,
 And I was void of Comfort grown.
 He's dead! he's dead! with them I cry'd,
 And to each Sigh, each Groan reply'd. (ll. 233-238)

At the same time, however, the speaker is distanced from the mass of mourners by her own sorrow and grief. She only superficially relates to Dryden and Britannia when she repeats their cries of “He's dead! he's dead!” (l. 237), and feels, instead, strongly connected to Orpheus (“The *Thracian* Bard” (l. 239)) and to Princess Anne. Thereby, the speaker fashions herself as both a (national) poet and a mother.⁸¹³ Relating to Orpheus and Princess Anne, the speaker carefully constructs herself as immeasurably melancholic without, however, transgressing the socio-cultural norms. Orpheus's sorrow and grief over the final loss of his beloved Eurydice,⁸¹⁴ serves as a measure with which to compare the intensity and poetic expression of the speaker's own feelings (“The *Thracian* Bard was not more mov'd, / When he had lost the Fair he lov'd” (ll. 239-240)). The relation to Princess Anne, on the other hand, is based on a kind of sympathetic melancholic mourning through which the speaker feels the pain and sorrow of the mother:

⁸¹³ Olive (2002) shows how a number of early eighteenth-century women writers, among them Mary Chudleigh and Elizabeth Singer Rowe, looked for authorial empowerment through the “symbolic authority” (475) of Queen Anne as the new female monarch. That the elegy on the death of Anne's son commences Chudleigh's poetic volume is possibly one of the most visible signs for the cultural and political importance of the new Queen in the poet's works.

⁸¹⁴ For Orpheus, also see the analysis of Wharton's “To *Melpomene* against Complaint”, chap. 3.2, p. 117.

The Sorrows of the Princess pierc'd my Heart,
 And I, me thought, felt all her Smart:
 I wish'd I cou'd allay her Pain,
 Or part of her Affliction share;
 But Oh! such Wishes are in vain,
 She must alone the pond'rous Burthen bear. (ll. 244-249)

Although the speaker strongly expresses sympathetic-melancholic feelings, she also restricts her sympathy to Anne as the grieving mother, thus keeping the socially appropriate distance from the royal parent.

The poem meanwhile, progresses along its elegiac path drawing ever nearer to consolation: After Dryden and Britannia, it is St George – “the fam'd Guardian of our Isle” (l. 259) – who enters the scene with great pomp (see l. 260) and provides the necessary comfort and consolation for his nation, “the much griev'd *Britannia*” (l. 263). With him “a sudden Light the Place o'er spread / Back to their genuine Night the frighted Shadows fled” (ll. 255-256) lifting the gloom from the pastoral idyll and marking not just the beginning of “a brighter Day” (l. 247) – a clear instance of the generic *topoi* of consolation.

St George, as England's patron saint, figures as a high authority to end the official time of mourning and to give appropriate comfort. As one of the most famous Christian figures in Western hagiography, an example of courage in defence of the poor as well as of the Christian faith, the appearance of Saint George underlines the social rank and importance of the deceased child.

By joining the constant repetition of “No more” (l. 264), he seems unified with his people, but puts a distinct end to the on-going lamentation: “No more, my much lov'd Charge, no more / Your time in useless Sorrow spend” (ll. 264-265). Although he comforts Britannia with stock formulae, e.g. the announcement that William now lives a “Life Divine” (l. 267), they appear sincere as George fashions himself as divine gatekeeper who had welcomed the duke on his arrival “on the Aethereal Shore” (l. 269). He introduces him to his ancestors of his “God-like Race” (l. 271), who welcome the boy in their midst.⁸¹⁵

Reassuring the English nation of the existence of a paradisiacal Christian afterlife, free of pain and worry, Britannia and her entourage “now no longer mourned” (l.

⁸¹⁵ According to George's consolatory speech, William became implemented in his appropriate position, especially with regard to the Stuart line that comes to an end with his death. William, Duke of Gloucester, is imagined in his proper place among “Caledonian Chiefs”, “the *Danish* Heroes” (l. 279), Mary Stuart (“the beauteous suff'ring Queen” (l. 286)), Charles I (“the martyr'd Prince”, l. 292), Charles II (“who long your Sceptre sway'd, / And whom his Subjects joyfully obey'd”, ll. 302-303) and Queen Mary II, “who lately grac'd the *British* Throne” (l. 305).

329) and the pastoral-like grove, once installed in the speaker's psychic landscape, is restored in stanza 15:

The Muse came back, and with her brought
Each sprightly, each delightful Thought:
Kindly she rais'd me from the Ground,
And smiling wip'd my Tears away (ll. 332-335)

However, the muse's gestures are not as comforting and tender as they first appear. Increasingly impatient, she demands the poet-speaker to join in Britannia's regained joy and to cease grieving and mourning:

Will you to Grief a Tribute pay,
And mourn for one who's far more blest,
Than those that are of Crowns possess?
No more, no more you must complain,
But with *Britannia* now rejoice (ll. 338-342)

Against the restoration of her surroundings (see ll. 343-350) – "And all are pleas'd, and all are gay" (l. 355) – the stanza ends on an ambivalent note. It becomes clear that the persona defies national consolation and is alienated from her own pastoral imagination, which had hosted her pleasing melancholy, as well as Dryden's elegy. Slyly, the muse persists: "And dare you still your Grief express, / As if you wish'd his Honours less, / And with an envious Eye beheld his Happiness?" (ll. 356-358). The obviously excessive experience of melancholic mourning and the defiance of consolation becomes the point of the speaker's transgression of social norms and individualisation, but also of exclusion and isolation. Here, the speaker's elegy also clearly turns against the 'elegy-within-the-elegy' and thus constitutes a poetic self based on melancholy and the maternal bond shared by herself and Anne.

Resuming the image of herself as a slave to the muse, the speaker emphasises her submission as well as the reasons for her continuous melancholic mourning:

And I would now my ready def'rance pay:
But Oh! in vain I strive, in vain I try,
While my lov'd Princess grieves, I can't comply:
Her Tears forbid me to rejoice,
[...]
Her Sighs arrest my Voice. (ll. 364-370)

Based on the sympathetic identification with Princess Anne as a mother, the persona is caught up in Anne's maternal mourning, which provides the mutual ground for both women. The strong bond between the royal mourner and the poet-speaker, also expressed by the parallelism in the verses 367 and 370, is reinforced by the physiopsychological and virtuous act of sympathy that leads to a gradual identification of the speaker with Anne. Connecting her own physical as well as psychological well-being to the mourning mother, the speaker consciously recognises poetry as the only

therapy against the Princess's excessive melancholia, and hence her own. Slyly as well as pleadingly, the persona invokes her muse:

Let her [Anne, S.B.] the Force or pow'ful Numbers find:
And by the Magick of your verse restore
Her former Peace, then add Delights unknown before
Let her be blest, my Joys will soon return,
But while she grieves, I ne'er can cease to mourn. (ll. 374-378)

In one way, the poem ends where it begins: with the persona's invocation of the muse and the yearning for refuge against the toils of life. However, the speaker was at first preoccupied with a more general meditation on life and the wish to withdraw from society to find more profundity in writing and contemplating. But this subjective emotional state of melancholy has been replaced by a deep melancholic mourning that is closely linked to the 'primary' mourner via sympathy. The speaker's melancholies hence derive from various sources: at first, she celebrates the pleasing and inspiring moments of a subjective melancholy mood. With the death of the Duke, she starts to experience the emotional paralysis and despair of this emotional state and becomes part of a collective, national state of mourning. When consolation sets in, the speaker's continuous melancholic mourning strongly defies consolatory strategies and serves as a moment of poetic individualisation, as well as sympathy for the mourning mother with whom the speaker identifies. I call this sympathetic melancholy, since it strongly participates in the mother's grief and blurs the borders between the poem's speaker and the grieving mother.⁸¹⁶ In this context, poetry becomes not only the means to express the experience of melancholic mourning, but also the only viable remedy⁸¹⁷.

Closely interwoven with the speaker's development of a poetic-melancholic self is the poem's negotiation of the elegy and its generic conventions. Against the background of a rather traditional pastoral elegy at the beginning of the text, the poem conducts an elegiac experiment according to the genre's pattern through the voice of the poet Dryden in a kind of 'elegy-within-the-elegy.' During this time, the original female speaker remains in the background. With her return comes the point of defiance of both consolation and consequently of elegiac conventions. The rejection of consolation and literary tradition, as well as the confirmation of melancholic mourning provide the speaker and the text with individuality via melancholy.

⁸¹⁶ For the blurring between the self and the other *via* sympathy, see Schwalm (2007), p. 24.

⁸¹⁷ For poetry as remedy, also see the analysis of Finch's "Ardelia against Melancholy" (chap. 3.2, p. 131) and Rousseau ("Medicine and the Muses", 1993).

“On the Death of my Honoured Mother Mrs. Lee: A Dialogue between *Lucinda* and *Marissa*” (1703)

Chudleigh’s autobiographically informed familial elegies⁸¹⁸ “On the Death of my Honoured Mother Mrs. Lee”, as well as “On the Death of my dear Daughter *Eliza Maria Chudleigh*” subscribe to a specific literary tradition of melancholic texts: the poetic debate. Like Milton’s “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso” and Cavendish’s “A Dialogue Between Melancholy and Mirth”, so Chudleigh’s familial elegies should, I argue, be read as companion poems in order to display their inherent full cycle of grief and melancholy.

There are several formal as well as content-related reasons that support this reading: The poems follow one another in Chudleigh’s volume *Poems on several Occasions*, and the continuous dialogic structure of both poems as well as their mutual generic combination of elegy and friendship poem argues for their reading as companions. The continuity of the poems is further enhanced by the perpetuation of the metre and rhyme scheme: both are written in iambic pentameter, and both feature a couplet structure. In terms of content, both poems grapple with the question of a morally and socially appropriate response to mourning and melancholy. This issue is expressed through the continuous debate of the allegorical voices of the two friends *Lucinda* and *Marissa*,⁸¹⁹ who embody reason and grief respectively. Whereas the voice of reason (i.e. *Lucinda*’s) seems to prevail in the first elegy, Chudleigh’s elegy on the death of her daughter closes on a far more ambivalent note and pictures *Marissa* (the voice of grief) in a state of deep melancholic mourning. The elegies are therefore examples of both Sacks’s concept of “successful mourning” and Ramazani’s “melancholic mourning”. However, read as companion poems, they also exemplify the process of poetic self-constitution through grief and melancholy as well as friendship and social ties, thus representing a relational-melancholic self.

“On the Death of my Honoured Mother Mrs. Lee” sets out as a friendship poem.⁸²⁰ With its specific opening, Chudleigh at once places the poem into two particularly feminine and well-established literary traditions, i.e. the elegy and friendship poetry.

⁸¹⁸ Familial, incl. maternal, elegies form the greatest part of elegies by women writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see also Lilley (1992), p. 84.

⁸¹⁹ ‘*Marissa*’ is Chudleigh’s poetic persona and coterie name, ‘*Lucinda*’s’ identity remains unknown.

⁸²⁰ For the entire poem, see Appendix p. 298.

She also associates herself with the legacy of ‘virtuous’ seventeenth-century women writers such as Katherine Phillips, also known as ‘the matchless Orinda’. By inscribing herself into this specific literary tradition, Chudleigh implicitly evokes some of the most prominent *topoi* of the early eighteenth-century discourse of friendship, like the “union of the soul” as well as the friend as “another self”, commonplaces which can be traced back to Aristotelian notions of friendship.⁸²¹ It is the communication structure, in particular, of Chudleigh’s two elegies that emphasises the construction of the poetic self through the dialogue with the friend, its “other self,” with which the primary self shares its emotions and thoughts. Against this background, the poetic dialogue – contrary to the exchange of letters – is a communication within the poetic self, by which it negotiates its own individuality in relation to and through the friend.

In the current context, the friendship poem provides access to the latter elegiac part of the text and, in relation, to Marissa’s emotions. Throughout the long friendship passage (ll. 1-54), the poem establishes a highly intimate, symbiotic bond between Lucinda and Marissa and allows the reader to approach Marissa’s grievous and melancholic world, which is mirrored in her friend’s speech. Through Lucinda the reader approaches the situation and learns about Marissa’s deep sadness and unsociable withdrawal: “What, my *Marissa*, has *Lucinda* done / that thus her once lov’d Company you shun?” (ll. 1-2). Referring to herself in the third person, Lucinda’s opening question instantly displays the apparent emotional distance she discerns between herself and Marissa. Lucinda continues to remind Marissa of their friendship, which she characterises in marital terms and which, again, refers to the common *topos* of the friends’ “union of the souls”:

I beg you by that Zeal I’ve shewn you,
That Tenderness which is to Friendship due,
By those dear sacred Bonds our Souls have ty’d,
Those Bonds, which Death it self shall ne’er divide. (ll. 7-10)

In the course of Lucinda’s opening speech (ll. 1-21), her distress intensifies and the need to discover the reasons of Marissa’s “wond’rous Strangeness” (l. 12) becomes increasingly urgent. And yet, Lucinda is bound to sympathise with Marissa, whose emotions she can only register from the outside:

⁸²¹ For a good introduction to the eighteenth-century friendship poem and the familiar letter as a feminine genre, see Haslett (2010). For a comprehensive introduction to the forms of classical friendship, from Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero to ancient Christian ideals of friendship, see Konstan (1997) and Price (1989).

When you were chearful, I was truly blest,
 And now your Sorrow deeply wounds my Breast:
 I view it thro' the thin Disguise you wear,
 And spite of all your Caution, all your Care,
 Hear ev'ry rising Sigh, and view each falling Tear. (ll. 17-21)

Lucinda's persistence finally causes Marissa to break her silence. Her reply to Lucinda's both anxious and reproachful speech is likewise characterised by her care. It confirms their friendship and thus aims at a different notion of amicable love than Lucinda's. Whereas Lucinda refers to a symbiotic union of the friends, Marissa emphasises the virtue of responsibility to keep the beloved friend away from any harm – even from one's own distress. Keeping herself at a distance, Marissa argues

For Love's a Passion of the noblest kind,
 And when 'tis stated in a gen'rous Mind,
 'Twill be from mean Designs and Interest free
 Not interrupt a Friend's Felicity. (ll. 28-31)

Against Lucinda's eager and anxious wish to share the friend's sadness, Marissa's reply becomes more emphatic in trying to keep her friend and, by analogy, her own emotions at bay. The anaphoric and climatic use of "O let" in line 37 and 41 suggests that Marissa increasingly presses her friend to leave her alone in her misery. Her emphatic wish is further underlined by the repetition of "no more, no more" in verse 42:

O let my Griefs remain unknown to you.
 Free from sad Thoughts may you forever live,
 And all your Hours to Mirth and Pleasure give:
 [...]
 O let me live a Stranger to your Breast:
 No more, no more my worthless Name repeat;
 Abandon me to this obscure Retreat;
 Make haste from hence, my Sight will damp your Joy,
 And the blest Calmness of your Soul destroy. (ll. 37-45)

Marissa's degree of grief and melancholy is now fully revealed. Asking Lucinda to desert her, Marissa strives for abandonment of her self, and pleads for her "worthless name" not to be repeated (l. 42). She opts to live in a self-chosen state of total oblivion in "this obscure Retreat" (l. 43). Notably, Marissa considers the sheer "Sight" of her enough to "damp your [Lucinda's] Joy" (l. 44), a phrase possibly referring to a humoral notion of Lucinda's endangered sanguine (fiery) temperament, which Marissa's tears might stifle or even extinguish.⁸²²

Marissa's attempts, however, turn out to be futile. With her refusal to leave her friend, the internalisation of the friend as "another self" is clearly visible. Like an

⁸²² For humouralism, also see Introduction of this study, p. 10.

echo, Lucinda repeats the sighs and groans of Marissa.⁸²³ Lucinda, however, bemoans her own fate of her allegedly unrequited love for Marissa: “Return each Sigh, and ev’ry moving Groan, / And to repeating Echo’s [*sic!*] make my Moan, / And tell them how unkind my lov’d *Marissa’s* grown” (ll. 49-51). With both friends mourning their own fates, the friendship poem part of the text ends on a grievous note.

The elegy becomes dominant for the rest of the poem. In its course, the dialogue increasingly shifts towards Marissa’s interior. Lucinda becomes the allegorical voice of reason that serves as a counterweight to Marissa’s excessive grieving and that will finally prevail, thus turning Marissa into a ‘successful’ mourner, in as far as successful here refers to a balance between melancholic despair and appropriate sadness.

The poem does not show any significant structural change in its transition from the friendship poem to the elegy, since it continues in heroic couplets. Marissa’s share of the dialogue slightly increases in the elegiac part, which speaks for a re-balancing of both the friendship and the allegorical relationship between reason and grief. The death of Marissa’s daughter thematised in the second elegy, however, will challenge this well-negotiated balance.

The elegy on the death of Marissa’s mother Philinda generally follows the normative pattern of lament, praise, and consolation. Setting off to finally provide the cause “that makes me mourn” (l. 54) for her friend Lucinda, Marissa delays the enunciation of her mother’s death – “a Loss so vast, so vastly great” (l. 56) – and mixes her speech with narrative elements of lament and praise. By failing to verbalise her mother’s death, Marissa defies any acceptance of this irretrievable loss. Her defiance is so determined that when she finally does talk about Philinda’s death, she does not use her own voice. Rather, she outsources this announcement by digressing into another violent struggle between Reason and Nature (i.e. Passions) within herself (see ll. 62-64). In this context, Philinda’s death is finally announced through the voice of Nature (see l. 65): “Wretched *Marissa!* all thy Comfort’s fled, / And all thy Joy with thy lov’d Mother dead” (ll. 66-67).

Nature’s speech is highly ambivalent, since it lures Marissa into the depths of mourning and melancholy. Copiously idealising and lamenting Philinda as well as her numerous virtues – “The best of Wives, of Mothers, and of Friends” (l. 71) –, Nature poses the question which is central to both elegies: “And should not such a

⁸²³ Also, of course, like Ovid’s deeply melancholic and lovesick nymph Echo.

Loss Complaints inspire?" (l. 72). Through this question, Nature legitimates both Marissa's excessive grief as well as its poetic manifestation. And what is more, in the course of Nature's speech she increasingly encourages Marissa to mourn in abundance instead of disciplining her passions: "Tears are becoming, and a Tribute due / To one so worthy, and so dear to you" (ll. 79-80).

Ensnared by her own passions, Marissa finally reaches a melancholic crisis, which is located at the centre of the poem:

By her [Nature; S.B.] thus urg'd, I gave my Sorrow way,
And did the Dictates of my Grief obey:
In this Recess, remote from Human Kind,
I thought, I shou'd not Interruption find (ll. 81-84).

The question of how much grief is appropriate is here probed by Marissa's excessive grief and melancholy. Clearly showing the signs of 'pathological' grief, the text refers to well-established ideas and melancholy formulae, such as the surrender to despair, sadness and the subsequent withdrawal from society, as well as the desire to ponder undisturbed over one's fate (see l. 84).

Moreover, this passage further suggests the need for the friendship poem at the beginning. Since Marissa is (mentally) absent and forlorn in an inner "close Asylum of Despair" (l. 88),⁸²⁴ the friend is needed to address the melancholic, absent other, in order to literally enter her "Asylum." This need underlines the severity of Marissa's melancholy, which she readily confesses:

Most mind themselves, the Absent are forgot;
And this had doubtless been *Marissa's* Lot,
Had not the kind *Lucinda's* tender Care
Sought out this Asylum of Despair,
And brought her hither all my Woes to share. (ll. 81-89)

Although the text clearly rejects melancholy as a consequence of immoderate and uncontrollable grief, the explicit negation and reference to melancholic *topoi* (e.g. the "Asylum of Despair", the withdrawal in a "Recess") underline the visibility of melancholy in the poem and also present a form of appropriation.⁸²⁵ However, the

⁸²⁴ It remains an interesting question whether "Asylum" alludes to melancholy as a form of madness in this context. According to the *OED*, the word "asylum" refers only since the late eighteenth century to "A benevolent institution affording shelter and support to some class of the afflicted, the unfortunate, or destitute; e.g. an asylum for the mentally ill (formerly 'lunatic asylum'), to which the term is sometimes popularly restricted" ("asylum, n.", *OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12340?rskey=IPOIOO&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>; last visit 13 Jan. 2012).

⁸²⁵ For negation as a type of appropriation, see FN 518.

notion of appropriate grief, which is strongly linked to the construction of Philinda as a role model of feminine virtue, denies the approval of melancholy in this poem.⁵²⁶ The image of Philinda is mainly constructed through the extensive praise of Lucinda and Marissa, which once again proves the strong union of the friends. During this specific part of the elegy, the dialogic structure of the poem is set aside. The friends' voices merge into one in their unanimous admiration of Philinda.

In tune with the standard *topos* of unspeakability ("Yes, she was more, much more than you can name" (l. 102)), Lucinda and Marissa apotheosise Philinda not only as "Angels kind, / As Nature lib'ral, of a God-like Mind" (ll. 94-95), "Cheerful, obliging, gen'rous" (l. 103), but also as "Full of Compassion, and from Censure free, / And of a most extensive Charity" (ll. 106-107), and thus exemplary in every respect of feminine conduct and virtue. Most of all, however, it is Philinda's emotional constancy and control over her passions that Lucinda and Marissa continuously praise, and which constructs the mother as both a stark contrast to her grieving daughter as well as a role model to adapt to.

Even facing her final sickness, Philinda proves to be in control over her passions:

When her last Sickness came, that dire Disease
Which did on her in sudden Fury seize,
With utmost Range the Fort of Life assail,
Resolv'd by racking Tortures to prevail;
O with what Patience did she bear her Pain,
And all th' Attacks of cruel Death sustain!
The dreadful Ill could not molest her Mind,
There she did still a happy Calmness find,
A well fixt Pleasure, a substantial Joy,
Serenity which nothing could destroy (ll. 118-127)

Here, the poem effectively sets positively connoted words such as "bear", "sustain", "Calmness", "Pleasure" and "Joy" against an entire word field of martial descriptions of sickness in order to create the elevated notion of Philinda's virtues. Philinda's idealised virtue thus serves as a foil against which Marissa's excessive grief and melancholy becomes highly questionable. With this strategy of idealisation, Lucinda criticises her friend's overabundant grief and scolds her: "'Tis unbecoming

⁵²⁶ In her essay "Of Grief", Chudleigh (1710/1993) herself advises her readers to take a stoic approach to deal with grievous incidents in life, and not to give in to overwhelming grief and melancholy: "Let us resolve to trouble the World no more with tedious Accounts of our Sufferings, nor indulge our selves in making dismal Reflections on the disagreeable Circumstances of our Lives; [...]; let us accustom our selves to make little Experiments of our Strength, to use our selves to little Trials, to consider beforehand what may happen, and then prepare for it. Premeditation will keep our Minds sedate and cool, firm, and ready for an Assault, prevent Surprizes, put us in possession of pleasing Serenity, a delightful Calmness of Soul, and such a Chearfulness of Temper, as will discover it self in our Faces, and manifest it self in all our Actions" (239f.). For an overview of the standard stoic consolatory formulae – as they can also be found in Chudleigh's poems –, see Jackson (1986), p. 314.

such a Grief to show, / As can from nothing but ungovern'd Passion flow" (ll. 136-137). This is the point at which the poem reassumes its dialogic structure and where Lucinda's voice starts to turn into the voice of Reason, to which Marissa's voice of grief and melancholy slowly succumbs.

Although the vocal union of the friends is repeatedly interrupted by the dialogic structure, their general reunion and Marissa's compliance to Lucinda's voice of reason are conveyed by the anaphora of "'Tis", when Marissa finally poses the ultimate questions of the poem: "but who can part / From one she loves, without a bleeding Heart?" (ll. 138-139). Lucinda, keeping the stylistic union with her friend ("Tis hard, I own, but yet it may be done" (l. 140)), delivers her final and major speech, which employs a range of stock consolations (see l. 142)) and in which she praises reason as the fundamental principle of virtue (ll. 144-147).

Ultimately, it is not Lucinda's voice of reason that convinces Marissa to overcome her grief: Lucinda's arguments are only successful in that she imprints the image of Philinda onto Marissa's imagination. Encouraging the melancholic Marissa to lift her dejected eyes, Lucinda creates a vision of the mothers grave "From that dark Grave where her lov'd Body lies, / Raise, my *Marissa*, your dejected Eyes, / And view her Soul ascending to the Skies" (ll. 152-154). Lucinda begins to ventriloquise Philinda's voice ("Methinks I hear the glorious Vision say" (l. 162), thus recreating Philinda's image in the imagination of her daughter. In a surprisingly violent and hardly consoling manner, Philinda-Lucinda addresses Marissa:

What is't, *Marissa*, makes you still complain,
Are you concern'd that I am void of Pain,
And wou'd you have me wretched once again?
[...]
And do you grieve me because I'm yours no more,
[...]
If this do's cause your Grief, no more Complain;
'Twill not long be e'er we shall meet again;
[...]
Till that blest Time, with decent Calmness wait,
And bear unmov'd the Pressures of your Fate. (ll. 162-182)

Again, the imagined conjuring up of the mother's voice – through Lucinda – is used to mark the difference between Philinda's feminine virtue and reason, and Marissa's seemingly unacceptable indulgence in grief and melancholy. Marissa concedes and internalises the image of her mother as a moral and social guide and source of comfort. Lastly, and consistently with the generic pattern, Marissa becomes a 'successful' mourner *via* the introjection of her mother as a better self who will live

on in her self and by the substitution of the dead with both current and future poems. And so the poem ends:

She lives within, and governs in my Breast:
I'll strive to live those Virtues she has taught,
They shall employ my Pen, my Tongue, my Thought:
Where e'er I go her Name my Theme shall prove,
And what soe'er I say, shall loudly speak my Love. (ll. 191-195)

"On the Death of my dear Daughter *Eliza Maria Chudleigh*: A Dialogue between *Lucinda* and *Marissa*" (1703)

The fragile balance of Marissa's adjusted self is challenged in the companion elegy "On the Death of my dear Daughter *Eliza Maria Chudleigh*."⁸⁷ Marissa's reconstruction of her self is now confronted with the loss of her social ties, which is epitomised by the death of both her mother and, shortly after, her daughter. Besides the personal loss, the loss of these social markers renders her unable to relate to herself both as daughter and mother – a fact that threatens her social and poetic self.

Whereas the poem on Philinda's death primarily negotiates the appropriate degree of (feminine) grieving and mourning, the elegy on Eliza's death strongly focuses on Marissa's melancholy experience. Her growing scepticism of the elegy's consolatory powers further promotes her poetic self-constitution through melancholic mourning. Extending the dialogic structure from the previous elegy, it is Marissa who seeks to reach out to her 'other self' Lucinda. The first ten lines of the poem already witness her despair and doubts expressed by a number of implicitly posed questions, (ll. 1-10) to which Marissa's ruminating thoughts cannot provide any answers, let alone consolation. The melancholic crisis triggered by the premature death of her daughter questions fundamental tenets of Marissa's former self-construction, such as her religious faith (see l. 3, 7-8) as well as her belief in reason as a leading principle in life. With the traditional pattern of elegy – lament, praise, and consolation – still lingering in the background, the poem establishes Marissa's perspective as dominant.⁸⁸ Unlike

⁸⁷ Chudleigh's daughter died in 1701/02. In "To the Learn'd and Ingenious Dr. *Musgrave* of Exeter", Marissa not only sings the praises of the physician Dr. Musgrave (probably Dr. William Musgrave (1655-1721)) and his medical skills – "You like a second *Aesculapius* rise, / Before your *Fame*, that noisie Goddess, flies, / And *Musgrave's* Name is echo'd through the Skies" (ll. 77-79) –, but also describes her daughter's illness (see stanza two of the poem). For "On the Death of my dear Daughter *Eliza Maria Chudleigh*", see Appendix p. 302.

⁸⁸ This perspective is only interrupted when Marissa focuses for a brief moment on her daughter Eliza (see l. 11), only to return to herself by relating Eliza's death again to herself: "She's fled, she's fled from my deserted Arms" (l. 12). The focus shifts back once more to Eliza in the conceptual metaphor of sickness as war, which Marissa had also used in describing her mother's death struggle, but which is kept to a minimum. Even the slightly ambivalent allusion to a possible recovery through art, as

the previous elegy, the text transposes its melancholic effect onto the reader when Marissa forces her friend Lucinda to relive and observe once more the agonies of her dying daughter Eliza. It becomes obvious that Marissa's revisiting of Eliza's final moments is not necessarily part of a 'normal' process of mourning, but a violent act of melancholic mourning. Eliza's death is vividly envisioned in Marissa's mini-narrative in which she compels Lucinda (and the reader) to literally observe the death of her daughter through her eyes. Here, an extensive paradigm of seeing and watching, which gains force and speed through the use of the dramatic present tense in this passage, helps to create a vivid scene of Eliza's last moments:

Methinks I still her dying Conflict view,
 And the sad Sight does all my Grief renew:
 Rack'd by Convulsive Pains she meekly lies,
 And gazes on me with imploring Eyes,
 With Eyes which beg Relief, but all in vain,
 I see, but cannot, cannot ease her Pain:
 [...]
See how she labours; how she pants for Breath,
 She's lovely still, she's sweet, she's sweet in Death!
 Pale as she is, she beauteous does remain,
 Her closing Eyes their Lustre still retain:
 Like setting Suns, with undiminished Light,
 They hide themselves within the Verge of Night. (ll. 18-33; my emphasis)

Attending this death-scene, i.e. experiencing the scene through Marissa's eyes, also means 'being seen', since it is the exchanging glances of Marissa and her daughter (see ll. 21-22) that Marissa appears to relive and that reinforces the intimate bond between mother and daughter.⁸²⁹ Like Lucinda, the reader is caught up in Marissa's melancholic imaginings through which she perpetually renews "all my Grief" (l. 19). The theme of seeing is crucial for the poem. As death approaches, Marissa repeats single words or phrases more urgently, which emphasises her distress and catches the eye (and ear) of the reader, e.g. Eliza's struggling "See, how she labours; how she pants for Breath, / She's lovely still, she's sweet, she's sweet in Death!" (l. 28f., my emphasis). With death finally approaching, the light decreases (a conventional metaphor for dying) and the witnesses' sight is obscured until Eliza's 'light' is completely extinguished (see ll. 31-32).

medicine as well as literature, proves to be marginal in the then following triplet – "Could Art have sav'd her she had still been mine, / Both Art and Care together did combine, / But what is Proof against the Will Divine!" (ll. 15-17).

⁸²⁹ The bond between mother and daughter, but also the helplessness is also made visible in the text in l. 23, when Marissa laments: "I see but cannot, cannot ease her Pain." The phonological and graphic inversion of "see", obviously also part of the dominant paradigm of this passage, and "ease" connected through the negative, repeated obstacle of "cannot", vividly shows both the connection between Marissa ("see") and Eliza ("ease") and the helplessness which stands between them.

Exclaiming “She’s gone! she’s gone! she sigh’d her Soul away!” (l. 34), Marissa enters the last stage of her melancholic speech, which finally peaks in her wish for self-annihilation. The passage of Eliza’s death and the mourning mother’s emphatic wish to die is a vivid example of an experiential-formal literary melancholic text. Since the speaker experiences melancholy, the literary text reflects and mimics melancholy in its formal and structural elements: the continuous questioning at the beginning of the poem; the emphatic repetition of single words or phrases; the usage of dark sounds which interact with the wildly ruminating thoughts of melancholic Marissa; and finally her violent and repetitive re-living of her daughter’s death.

Lucinda’s brief reply seeks to console her deeply melancholic friend and attempts to reassure Marissa of their friendship, an attempt that Marissa dismisses by repeating her ardent desire to die. Marissa’s speech slowly drifts into a melancholic farewell, characterised by the melancholic structures and imagery established before, e.g. the repetition of selected words and formal devices, like the anaphora, as well as the speaker’s strong focus on her grave:

Farewel, farewell, take, take my last adieu,
 May Heav’n be more propitious still to you
 May you live happy when I’m in my Grave,
 And no Misfortunes, no Afflictions have (ll. 59-62; my emphasis)

Marissa’s melancholic visions of her death lead to the notable splitting of her self brought about by the projection of her own thoughts onto Lucinda. She suggestively imagines Lucinda’s future memories of her after her own death and, at the same time, recounts her own life as was, while anticipating its recollection from an outsider’s (Lucinda’s) point of view. By changing from a first-person speaker’s position into the third person, Marissa creates a temporary, alternative version of her self. She laments:

If to sad Objects you’ll some Pity lend,
 And give a Sigh to an unhappy Friend,
 Think of *Marissa* and her wretched State,
 How she’s been us’d by malicious Fate,
 Recount those Storms which she has long sustain’d,
 And then rejoice that she the Port has gain’d (ll. 63-68)

This scene climaxes in the imagined and longed for reunion between mother and daughter, which would reinstate Marissa’s poetic self and its former social ties. Still imagining her self in this distanced third-person role, Marissa anticipates:

The welcome Haven of eternal Rest,
 Where she shall be for ever, ever blest;
 And in her Mothers, and her Daughter’s Arms,
 Shall meet with new, with unexperienc’d Charms. (ll. 69-72)

Following that, Marissa resumes her position as first-person speaker. Her farewell address to Lucinda turns into an apostrophe to death. Recurring to traditional melancholy *formulae*, she longingly cries out:

Farewel, farewell; my Soul is in much haste.
Come Death and give the kind releasing Blow,
I'm tir'd with Life, and over-charg'd with Woe:
In thy cool, silent, unmolested Shade,
O let me by their [i.e. Philinda's and Eliza's; S.B.] dear Relicks laid;
And there with them from all my Troubles free,
Enjoy the Blessings of a long Tranquility. (ll. 74-80)

Again, the passage exemplifies contemporary melancholic images, like the overly mourning speaker in a graveyard setting that resembles a *locus amoenus*, thus displaying a softer and more pleasurable melancholy – possibly more so than the text as such actually represents.

Predictably, Lucinda's replica (ll. 81-131) displays her amicable sympathy, enriched by standard consolatory phrases (see ll. 119-124). The various ways in which Lucinda offers her sympathetic feelings for Marissa highlight the notion of Lucinda as Marissa's other self (see l. 82), which conforms to the generic features of the friendship poem. Oscillating between sympathy and reason, Lucinda comforts her deeply melancholic friend, inviting her to "on my Breast recline / Thy drooping Head, and mix thy Tears with mine: / Here rest a while, and make a Truce with Grief" (ll. 81-83), before she resumes her voice of reason advising Marissa:

Recal your wand'ring Reason to your Aid;
And hear it calmly when it does persuade;
'Twill teach you Patience, and the useful Skill
To rule your Passions, and command your Will;
To bear Afflictions with a steady Mind,
Still to be easie, pleas'd, and still resign'd.
And look as if you did no inward Trouble find. (ll. 125-131)

Although Marissa seems to concede ("I know, *Lucinda*, this I ought to do, / But oh! 'tis hard my Frailties to subdue", ll. 132-133), her submission to reason and consolation is not as whole-hearted as it was in the previous elegy. It turns out that Marissa's final passage is preoccupied with life's long struggle against mourning and melancholy (see ll. 134-138). Whilst Marissa is consoled and led by reason after the death of her mother, the situation is now clearly different and far more ambivalent. There are the hopeful and fierce attempts to shake off melancholy and grief and live a life "with a steady Mind" (l. 129). However, there are doubts about whether Marissa will prevail and overcome grief. Recounting her story of grievous melancholy in martial terms, Marissa reflects:

But when it [Eliza's death, S.B.] came, Grief quickly did prevail,
 And I soon found my boasted Courage fail:
 Yet still I strove, but 'twas, alas! in vain,
 My Sorrow did at length th'Ascendant gain (ll. 138-141; my emphasis)

She seems "resolv'd , I will no longer yield; By Reason led, I'll once more take the Field" (ll. 142-143, my emphasis). The poem underlines the ambiguous signs of this battle, and does not provide the generically required conclusion, but leaves the outcome of Marissa's battle against melancholy ambiguously open:

Which till I've done, I never will give o'er,
 But still fight on, and think of Peace no more;
 With an unweary'd Courage still contend,
 Till Death, or Conquest, does my Labour end. (ll. 146-149; my emphasis)

It is the text's final ambivalence, the ultimate defying of standard consolation as well as the strong and recurring melancholic structures and imagery that present Marissa as wavering between mourning and melancholy.

A dialogical reading of Chudleigh's familial elegies suggests that melancholy is both negated and appropriated, and hence expresses the persona's ambivalence of the social and cultural appropriateness of mourning and melancholy. Whereas the first poem displays a case of "successful mourning," the second poem denies the final consolation and the successful ending of the process of mourning. It is "melancholic mourning" in its ambivalence and violence, enhanced by its maternal form that threatens the poetic self in all its aspects: as a daughter, a mother, and as a poet.

The selected elegies by Chudleigh both challenge and negotiate the genre's suitability for the adequate expression of grievous and melancholic femininity. The elegies on Philinda and Eliza question the genre with their complementary characters through which they both accept and defy consolation, and therefore also the elegiac pattern. The acutely political elegy on the duke of Gloucester, on the other hand, 'plays' with the genre's conventions by presenting both the 'masculine' and the 'female' elegy. The 'masculine' elegy and its pattern of praise-lament-consolation, however, is outsourced and rendered through Dryden, Britannia and, finally, St. George ('elegy-within-the-elegy'). It underpins the moment of national crisis within Chudleigh's poem. The 'female' elegy and its adamant refusal of consolation, meanwhile, are attributed to the single female speaker who individualises her poetic self in the course of the poem. After retiring from society, the speaker remains an observer throughout the passages of national mourning of the dead prince and separating her poetic self even further after the nation is consoled and reunited in the face of the catastrophe. However, the poet-speaker's process of individualisation is

further enhanced by her increasing identification with the mourning mother and her sympathetic melancholy.

“Oh regard a mother’s moan”: Mehetabel Wright’s “To an Infant expiring the Second Day of its Birth” (1733)

Mehetabel Wright (1697-1750) is the only woman poet of this study who was actually perceived as melancholic by her contemporaries. Better known as the sister of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, she was educated in the classics and was said to be able to read Greek by the age of eight – a fact often mentioned in biographical accounts in order to emphasise her intellectual abilities as well as the social and intellectual differences between herself and her late husband, the plumber William Wright.

By her mid-twenties, Wright was “in serious conflict with her family” after a series of declined marriage proposals and unhappy relationships.⁸³⁰ In 1725, she eloped several times and returned home pregnant – “a fatal error”, as Robert Southey puts it in his *The Life of Wesley*.⁸³¹ This not only led to a quick marriage with William Wright, a semi-literate plumber of Louth at Haxey, but also to an enduring estrangement from her family. The marriage and the subsequent life of Mehetabel Wright turned out to be acutely unhappy. The child Wright was expecting at her wedding died in 1726, and several other children died in infancy, which Wright traced back to her husband’s lead works. Several semi-autobiographical poems, e.g. “Address to her Husband”, “Wedlock. A Satire”, “To an Infant Expiring the second day of its Birth” – all of which are still anthologised today – bespeak the deprivations of married life and the grievances of child death. By 1729, she resumed the correspondence with her estranged family. Until her death in March 1750,⁸³² the relationship remained strained, despite her conversion to Methodism in 1743.

As Knights has convincingly shown,⁸³³ Wright’s writings fell prey to censorship or suppression by her family, as well as by the family’s historians and editors in order to construct a specific image of the Wesleys. The construction of Mehetabel Wright as a melancholic and the alleged reasons for her melancholy played an important part in her portrayal within the family’s official biography. In 1754, the poet John

⁸³⁰ Lonsdale (1989), p. 110.

⁸³¹ Southey (1821/1925), vol. I, p. 314.

⁸³² The year of death differs between 1750 and 1751.

⁸³³ See Knights (1997).

Duncombe, who had personally known Wright and her husband in London, immortalised Mehetabel Wright in his famous poem *The Femiiniad* as a poet suffering from religious melancholy:

But ah! why heaves my breast this pensive sigh?
 Why starts this tear unbidden from my eye?
 What breast from sighs, what eye from tears refrains,
 When, sweetly-mournful, hapless WRIGHT complains?
 And who but grieves to see her gen'rous mind,
 for nobler views and worthier guests designed,
 Admit the hateful form of black Despair,
 Wan with the gloom of superstitious care?
 In pity-moving lays, with earnest cries,
 She call'd on heav'n to close her weary eyes,
 And, long on earth by heart-felt woes oppress'd,
 Was borne by friendly Death to welcome rest. (ll. 187-198)

Duncombe reflects in his poem not only the wide range of Wright's melancholies – from “sweetly-mournful” to “hateful form of black Despair” – but feels himself melancholized by her poems (see ll. 187-190). In order to raise sympathy in his readers, Duncombe epitomises Wright as an intelligent but grief-stricken woman poet marked by her religious melancholy (“Wan with the gloom of superstitious care”, l. 194) and her ardent death-wish. Duncombe's text clearly points towards religion, and hence implicitly to the Wesley family, as the source of Wright's desperate demeanour and was harshly criticised for this. Later family biographers like Adam Clarke and John Whitehead, both fervent Methodists, take Duncombe's poem as a welcome peg on which they hang their own theories of Wright's deep melancholy. Unsurprisingly in their accounts, religion and the Wesley family are completely acquitted from any reproaches made against them. It is Wright's husband and “her unsuitable, wretched, ill-fated marriage”⁸³⁴ which become the source of Wright's melancholy. Whitehead elaborates:

Her situation preyed upon her mind, her health and strength and gradually wasted away, and at length she sunk into a degree of melancholy that made her truly wretched. Most of her verses which have been preserved, though beautiful, and written in the true spirit of poetry, are saddened with an air of deep distress, which strongly marks the state of body and mind.”⁸³⁵

Whitehead's position as physician as well as a fervent Methodist is well discernible throughout his observations. While he stresses that Wright's personal circumstances led to “a degree of melancholy that made her truly wretched,” he continues by arguing that her private life motivated her despair, and not religion as Duncombe

⁸³⁴ Clarke (1823/1836), p. 296.

⁸³⁵ Whitehead (1793), p. 63.

proposed in his poem. On the contrary, “at length religion coming to her aid, it soothed the anguish of her mind, and gave her peace, though she never recovered her health.”⁸³⁶

He even goes a step further and argues not only for the authenticity and truth of his own account, but also denounces Duncombe as fundamentally mistaken, implicitly accusing him of vilifying religion as a cause for despair and melancholy:

From this authentic account of Mrs. *Wright*, taken from original letters, we may correct an error insinuated in his *Feminead* [sic!], that her pungent distress and gloomy despair, originated from mistaken and superstitious views of religion: it appears, on the contrary, that they arose from a very different cause, and that was the thing that restored her to peace and happiness; and indeed the only thing that could do it. [...] It is grievous to see authors, whose works are likely to be read, take every opportunity to dress out religion in the most ugly forms they can invent to deter young people from embracing it, and attributing to it the calamities of life which alone religion is able to alleviate and redress.⁸³⁷

Both Duncombe's as well as Whitehead's accounts depict Mehetabel Wright as a melancholic and as a poet. Both describe her as truly unhappy and full of despair. The key differences, however, are their positions on religion, the Wesley family, and the family's behaviour towards her. Whereas Duncombe problematises religion especially in its inherent “superstition”, Whitehead's agenda as biographer and Methodist is clearly discernible: he rectifies the battered image of Methodism and of the Wesleys alike.⁸³⁸ The debate on the causes of Wright's melancholy clearly demonstrates how contested the label ‘melancholic’ was and how damaging it was considered to be with regard to the social reputation of the family. Whatever the reasons were for Wright's despair and melancholy, it is quite remarkable that she was regarded as a melancholic woman poet during the eighteenth century and beyond. Just as Wright's personal melancholy has been put to the disposal of later editors and biographers, so have her poems. Since there is no critical edition of her poetic works so far, the text base is highly uncertain, as the poems appear in differing versions in various literary magazines, private papers and official family biographies.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁶ Whitehead (1793), p. 68.

⁸³⁷ Whitehead (1793), p. 70.

⁸³⁸ For John Wesley's notion of religious melancholy, especially after the experience of conversion in a moment of crisis of faith, see his sermons “The Wilderness State” and “Heaviness thro' Manifold Temptations” (both 1760) in *Depression and Melancholy, 1660-1800*, (2012), vol. I, pp. 127-139.

⁸³⁹ If not otherwise stated, I have used the first known publication of the poem and referred to other editions if necessary.

One of Wright's better-known poems is her maternal elegy⁸⁴⁰ "To an Infant expiring the second day of its Birth"⁸⁴¹, first published anonymously in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in October 1733.⁸⁴² The poem captures the final moments of a newborn and the "increasingly grief-stricken attempts" of the first-person mother-speaker "to make contact with her dying child."⁸⁴³ Contrary to the generic convention of lamenting death, this elegy, or this *epicedium* – a poem or song of mourning of the dead, usually recited in the presence of the corpse – laments a death which is yet to happen, and is thus anticipatory.⁸⁴⁴ Its melancholic effect, which the reader seems to directly experience, is therefore not the direct result of an extensive period of grief, but of the immediacy of the child's death as well as the anticipation of both mourning and melancholy.

Generally, Wright's elegy consists of 20 verses in couplets and is divided into two equal parts of the same structure. This division corresponds to the content of the poem: within each part, the mother-speaker apostrophises the dying newborn before she returns to reflect on herself in relation to the child. The poem creates a strong tension through its subheading "Written by its Mother, in Imitation of NAMBY PAMBY", a title which was dropped in later editions. By positioning her poem in the tradition of Namby Pamby,⁸⁴⁵ Wright uses the metrical formalities of short lines in

⁸⁴⁰ For a thorough discussion of the maternal elegy and maternal "melancholic mourning," see Phillippy (2002), especially pp. 139-149.

⁸⁴¹ For the entire poem, see Appendix p. 305. I base my analysis of Wright's elegy on its first publication of the poem in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1733, hence during the poet's lifetime, despite an existent modern edition of the text, which differs slightly from the original (e.g. in l. 6, where the original uses "Bends" whilst Lonsdale writes "Rends"). John Wesley's biographer Whitehead (1793) reprints the poem with an additional concluding stanza: "That whene'er the fatal cloud / Must thy radiant temples shroud; / When deadly damps (impending now) / shall hover round thy destin'd brow; Diffusive may their influence be, / And with the blossom blast the tree!" (67). Although these lines bear some biographical resemblances to Wright, e.g. the "deadly damps", which could be read in the context of Wright's reproaching belief that her babies were killed by the lead-fumes connected to her husband's business. The construction of this last stanza, however, differs notably from the rest of the poem and the authorship of these lines remains uncertain, notwithstanding their biographical readings.

⁸⁴² Another of Wright's melancholic poems is "An Epitaph on Herself" (Wr. by 1750; pub. 1763). Again, there are several versions of this poem which differ greatly also with regard to their 'melancholiness'. For a short discussion of the poem, see Knights (1997), p. 26.

⁸⁴³ Clymer (2010), p. 178.

⁸⁴⁴ Clymer (2010), who reads the poem in context of the generic development of the funeral elegy between 1650 and 1750, comes to the same conclusion (see 179). Acc. to Lonsdale (1989), Wright wrote the poem during her confinement, so before the child was actually born. In a way, this information doubles the anticipatory nature of the poem, since it is an anticipation of an anticipation of an impending death, which is based on experience. Whitehead (1793) specifies the composition date to September 1728, the death of the child occurred on the third postpartum day (see 66).

⁸⁴⁵ The term commonly refers to a "weakly sentimental, insipidly pretty, affectedly or childish simple" literary and artistic composition or person (*OED online*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124916?rskey=4SZMNL&result=1#eid>; last visit 22 Feb. 2013). It is closely associated to the Augustan poet Ambrose Philips and his poem "To the Honourable Miss Carteret (1725)", whose

three trochees, followed by an extra-stressed monosyllabic, catalectic foot. This metre provides the poem with a lightness that strongly contradicts its subject matter. The playfulness inherent in the popularised and often satirised Namby Pamby stands in stark contrast to the poem's elegiac content and could almost be considered inappropriate. Thus challenging her readers' expectations of a conventional elegy – indicated by the main title – Wright creates a tension between content and form of the poem, which clearly leads to a stronger emotional expressivity within the poem. At the beginning of the poem, the mother-speaker softly approaches the child by describing its presence in tender, if conventional terms:⁸⁴⁶

Tender softness, infant mild,
Perfect, purest, brightest child;
Transient lustre, beauteous clay,
Smiling wonder of a day (ll. 1-4)

Based on soft s-sounds (see l. 1), an asyndeton of an impure alliteration of superlative adjectives (l. 2) against the background of standardised funerary *topoi* (e.g. the body as a clay vessel for a translucent soul⁸⁴⁷), the newborn expiring child is portrayed in an all-encompassing maternal tenderness, however ephemeral and fleeting.

The text sets forth with its prevalent structure of repetitive anaphora of "E're" in the verses five and seven in the first part and 13 and 17 in the second. The anaphora is doubly emphasised by its position at the beginning of the respective verses as well as by the metre as the first stressed syllable of the trochaic foot:

E're the last convulsive start
Bends thy *unresisting* heart;
E're the long enduring swoon
Weighs thy precious eyes-lids down. (ll. 5-8; my underlinings; italics in the original)

Generally, Clymer reads the anaphoric structure in both parts as the repeated attempts of the mother to get in contact with her dying child that becomes less responsive. Yet in spite of the mother's efforts, death is inevitable. As described by Clymer: "The infant's struggles are enumerated as a series of inevitable symptoms presaging its death, before the speaker hopes to be heard and seen by her fading child".⁸⁴⁸ Although I generally agree with Clymer's reading, I argue that the dominant

style and motives were lampooned by Henry Carey's highly successful poem "Namby Pamby" (1725). This poem earned Philips the nickname of 'Namby Pamby' which was further consolidated, e.g. through Pope's *Dunciad* (1728) (also see *DNB*-entry on Ambrose Philips by Andrew Varney; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22119?docPos=1>; last visit 22 Feb. 2013).

⁸⁴⁶ See Clymer (2010), p. 179.

⁸⁴⁷ See Clymer (2010), p. 179.

⁸⁴⁸ Clymer (2010), p. 179.

anaphoric structure of the poem also functions as a fundamental constituent of the text's melancholic structure.

The anaphoric "E're" exceeds the mere attempt of the mother to contact her child, insofar as it serves a condition which is set by the mother-speaker in order to keep the child rather than to let it go. In the first part for instance, she urges the child to "[...] regard a mother's moan" (l. 9), by which is meant the present poem, before it dies (see l. 7). By this effort the mother-speaker attempts not only to communicate with her child, but to prolong its fragile life by demanding something from it. The poem itself is the means of keeping the child alive. This is a deeply melancholic experience, since the speaker attempts to hold on to the most fleeting thing as such: life. The following two couplets emphasise this by their euphemistic treatment of death. By "the long enduring swoon / Weighs thy precious eyes-lids down" (ll. 7-8) the mother-speaker chooses a less than lifelike state – the swoon – but avoids calling death by its name in order to defy it.

The desire to keep contact with the child is reinforced in the second part of the poem through the word pattern of "sight" (which is introduced earlier in verse eight), "eyes-lids", and the perceived final closing of them. Line eleven revives this image again, as the mother-speaker addresses the "Fairest eyes", here a *pars pro toto* for the child *per se* as well as a metaphorical means to approach the child's soul. This image now rebuilds the physical bond between mother and child that has been literally severed (by birth) and is about to be severed for good by its impending death.

Closely associated to the eye/sight-paradigm is the *topos* of light as both an image of life and a divine power that emanates from the child's eyes, confirming the bond between mother and child:

Fairest eyes, whose dawning light
Late with rapture blest my sight,
E're your orbs extinguish'd be,
Bend their trembling beams on me (ll. 11-14; my underlinings)

Next, the speaker shifts towards common funerary *topoi* such as the image of the dying child as a flower:

Drooping sweetness, verdant flow'r
Blooming, with'ring in an hour
E're thy gentle breast sustains
Latest, fiercest, vital pains (15-18)

The focus, however, is not so much on the image of the child, but rather on the rapid deterioration of the infant, whose health declines from being verdant and blooming to withering "in an hour". The similarity of sounds in "Drooping" and "Blooming" (l. 15, 16) underlines the connection of these processes of life. As in the first part of

the poem, the structure of the second is designated by the asyndeton of superlative adjectives that reflect the child's singularity. The anaphora in the lines 13 and 17 emphasises both the structural vehemence of the scheme as well as the mother-speaker's plea to her child, where she fashions herself as inferior to her apotheosised child. Not only does the mother-speaker seek her child for a final blessing, she beseeches the expiring infant to accept her own wish to die: "Hear a suppliant! Let me be / Partner in thy Destiny" (ll. 19-20).

Generically, the constituents of Wright's elegy are only mildly pronounced. Whilst there are stronger traces of lament and praise of the child, the conspicuous but not unusual defiance of consolation and the still impending death "provoke [...] nothing but grief and a wish for union in death that is in the process of being denied in life."⁸⁴⁹ Beyond the obvious lack of the obligatory *consolatio*, on the formal level the text features the speaker's experience of melancholic mourning. Elements like the anaphora not only structure the poetic text as such but express the growing despair of the mother-speaker, which is also aired by the constant addressing of the child. The light-hearted metre of the Namby Pamby in conjunction with the impending death of the child creates a strong contrast that enhances the generally 'melancholizing' effect of the poem.

The melancholic reading draws power from the immediacy and plainness of the poem.⁸⁵⁰ There is nothing to distract from the poem's situation and from the sight of the dying child (through its mother's eyes). Although the actual death of the child has not (yet) occurred, and will not during the poetic moment, the mother-speaker is experiencing an anticipatory form of melancholic mourning. The radical element here is that the speaker remains within the dying scene without any hope of avoiding the final moment. Hence, the poem as such suspends the speaker in this moment between living and dying, between mourning and melancholy, between anxious hope and deep despair. There is no future beyond this moment and she is trapped in melancholic rumination and anticipation. Her constant apostrophe to the child in order to keep an imaginary bond is another device sustaining her in her melancholic clinging, however painful and bleak. As Clymer elaborates:

⁸⁴⁹ Clymer (2010), p. 179. Clymer argues that due to the short life span of the child in which there could not have been any achievement to praise.

⁸⁵⁰ The numerous pauses combined with the asyndeton in l. 2 and 18 give the impression of a faltering or haltered voice which is transferred to the way of reading the text.

On the one hand, the apostrophe bestows the possibility of animation which might support or imply a reciprocal return of the speaker's address and thereby forge an intersubjective relationship between subject and addressed object; even if the object does not thereupon turn into a speaking subject itself. [...] On the other hand, the possibility created by this particular apostrophe is progressively undercut and finally cancelled as a devastating impossibility.⁸⁵¹

Wright's elegy "To an Infant expiring the second day of its Birth" is a borderline case of melancholy poetry.⁸⁵² It hardly corresponds to important criteria such as self-reflection. In fact, the mother-speaker reflects upon her own feelings and thoughts only twice in the course of the poem, firstly when she asks the child to consider her poem (ll. 9-10), and secondly when she utters her wish to die (ll. 19-20). Even on these occasions, the reflection upon herself can only be conveyed through direct reference to the child itself. The focus of the poem and its speaker unmistakably lies on the infant and the impending death.

At the same time, the poem is an example of the diversity of melancholy poetry. The strongly 'melancholizing' effect of the text derives from the immediacy of the growing despair and melancholy of the mother-speaker, which is never fully articulated but nevertheless palpable until the end. Moreover, the form of 'melancholic mourning' expressed in this poem is not only anticipatory, but also angry (see l. 9) and paralyzing with regards to the mode: the act of writing prolongs the moment of dying, so the poetic self is trapped within a moment of endless wavering in anticipation, between mourning and melancholy.

"[T]he poignant Tortures of *Despair*": Elizabeth Boyd's "On an Infant's lying some Days unburied, for Want of Money, the *Father* being absent and ill" (1733)

If Wright's mother-speaker is emotionally trapped between life and death, the speaker of Elizabeth Boyd's epicedium is in a state of melancholic numbness. "On an Infant's lying some Days unburied, for Want of Money, the *Father* being absent and ill" grapples with child loss, where the mother-speaker transforms a 'common' experience into an individualised, yet distant lament.⁸⁵³ She does so by further adding

⁸⁵¹ Clymer (2010), p. 179f. The prevalence of the anaphoric structure of the poem serves a similar function. The mother-speaker demands signs of recognition, tries to condition the death of the child, will not let go and, thus, prolongs her (poetic) moment and with the life of the child.

⁸⁵² Generically, Wright's elegy is quite remarkable. Although the poem seems to substitute for the dying child, which is a distinct strategy of early modern maternal elegies (see Phillippy (2002), p. 155f.), this substitute does not provide any solace or consolation. It appears as a fetish, rather than as a substitute.

⁸⁵³ For the experience of child loss see, for instance, Ariès (1960/1973), who argues that child loss was a common and thus less regarded experience due to the high child mortality (see pp. 36-40). McDonald's (1981) evaluation of Richard Napier's case books has, however, shown that the biggest

to the suffered loss with poverty and abandonment and emphasising its social and personal dimensions. The poem was first published in her verse collection *The Humorous Miscellany, or, Riddles for the Beaux* in 1733.⁸⁵⁴ Little is known about the poet and novelist Elizabeth Boyd. Born in 1699, she seems to have spent some time in London where she tried to raise money through her writings as well as through the selling of stationary. Poverty and poor health seem to have characterised her life.⁸⁵⁵ In her short lifetime, she published some verse collections and longer poems (between 1727 and 1743), the novel *The Happy-Unfortunate; Or, The Female Page* (1732), and proposed a periodical, *The Snail*, of which only one issue appeared in 1745.

Besides the elegy in question, Boyd's "On the Death of an Infant of five Days old, being a beautiful but abortive Birth" is one of the rare examples of Boyd's writing still anthologised today. This text relates both the experience of child loss as well as the seemingly unsympathetic and difficult reaction of the child's father:

Oh! could the stern-soul'd Sex but know the Pain,
Or the soft *Mother's Agonies* sustain,
With tend'rest *Love* the obdurate *Heart* would burn,
And the shock'd *Father, Tear for Tear* return. (19-22)⁸⁵⁶

Both motives, the dead child and the absent father, are still dominant in the sequel poem "On an *Infant's* lying some Days [...]."⁸⁵⁷ The poem comprises of 16 verses in heroic couplets and from the speaker's general remarks on the social as well as emotional experience of child loss, it develops into an act of individualisation within this all too familiar experience.

The speaker's observations of the social and emotional state of orphaned mothers in the opening couplet of the text might be brief, but seminal, since they offer a glimpse of the social consequences of child loss: "When tender *Mothers* lose a long-wish'd Heir, / They feel the poignant Tortures of *Despair*;" (ll. 1-2).⁸⁵⁸ The use of the word "Heir" (l. 1) instead of "child" clearly suggests that the loss of a child means more than a mother's particular loss of a son. It also implies the loss of the woman's social status as a mother, and thus implies social pressure to produce an heir (see "long-

part of mentally disturbed patients were women who mourned the death of their children, which clearly speaks against Ariès hypothesis (see p. 78); also see Greer (1989, p. 12), whose argument I follow.

⁸⁵⁴ The title of the collection is somewhat misleading since the volume contains a number of rather distressing poems.

⁸⁵⁵ See Lonsdale (1989), p. 134f, and the *DNB*-entry on Elizabeth Boyd of Joyce Fullard; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45835>; last visit 28 Dec. 2012.

⁸⁵⁶ Boyd (1733), p. 18.

⁸⁵⁷ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 306.

⁸⁵⁸ Unless otherwise marked, all italics are in the original.

wished", l. 1). That the speaker refers to these mothers as "tender" (l. 1) points to their socially weakened and hence more vulnerable position, and especially towards their emotional susceptibility to the "poignant Tortures of *Despair*" (l. 2). "Tortures of *Despair*" only vaguely carry the connotation of religious despair or melancholy and so are only *potentially* discernible in the further structure of the poem. The predominance of the speaker's questions could be read as if addressing a higher metaphysical agency or God, but they remain too vague for confident conclusions. Leaving this religious speculation to one side, "Tortures of *Despair*" rather seems to depict the violence of the maternal emotions accompanied by their 'melancholic mourning'.

Against the social background of child loss, the poem's focus shifts to the speaker's social and emotional situation. Marked by poverty (as "the Curse of *Fate*", l. 3) and the death of several children ("And shrouded *Babes* on Jilting *Fortune* wait", l. 4), the persona wonders whether a "Mother's Agonies" (l. 5) can be surpassed, and refers back to the common *topos* of unspeakability in order to emphasise the intensity of her grievous feelings (see l. 6). The poem is set in the presence of the child's corpse, which not only reflects the specifically feminine culture and rites of death and mourning,⁸⁵⁹ but also underlines the poetic credibility of the event⁸⁶⁰ – in contrast to the more general reflections at the beginning of the poem.

Although the union of speaker and maternal self is constantly implied, the first-person subject seems to be covert throughout the text. Referring to herself in the third person, the speaker creates a palpable distance between her speaking self and her experiencing self. This split or separation leads, at first, to a greater clarity of thought and a diminished emotionality of the text as such. In the course of the poem, however, the speaker seems to be increasingly attacked by feelings of melancholy and despair, which reveal the fragility of the initially claimed distance.

A strong interjection by the speaker – "Inhuman Shock!" (l. 7) is triggered by the presence of her unburied child that had died five days earlier. Spitting questions in the air, the mother-speaker describes the horrific nature of her "distracting," deranging or maddening grief, which threatens to destroy her and leaves her in a state of wildest melancholy bordering on insanity:⁸⁶¹ "What Horrors rend the *Breast*? /

⁸⁵⁹ Phillippy (2002) describes the rites and practices of death and mourning and women's particular position there, see esp. chap. 1.

⁸⁶⁰ See Phillippy (2002), p. 169.

⁸⁶¹ For grief as a cause of insanity, see FN 751.

When by distracting *Grief's* the Soul deprest?" (ll. 7-8). In her despair, the speaker longs for "*Fortitude*" (l. 9), well aware of her economic, social, and personal circumstances (interconnected by the f-alliteration of "*Friend's* forsake" and "*Fortune's* low")⁸⁶² that put emotional strength out of reach.

In the last third of the poem (l. 10), the mother-speaker actually apostrophises her deceased child, "*Unhappy Babe*", in order to express a combined lament of the general absence of the child's father who had neither welcomed his child nor handed it over to death (see l. 11). The mother not only mourns the death of the child, but also emphatically bewails her own personal fate embedded in the socially common experience of child loss and poverty: "for each the *Mother* bled, / The *Father* dying, the dear *Infant* dead;" (ll. 13-14). Void of comfort or consolation, the mother-speaker closes the poem with a bleak look to her recent past: "*Ten tedious Days*, the melancholy Sight, / *Drew Tears*, that once gave *Raptures* of *Delight*" (ll. 15-16).⁸⁶³ Time and affect are connected by a slant d/t-alliteration and the closing couplet again demonstrates a greater emotional distance than the verses before. Trapped in the (imagined) "melancholy Sight" of her child as well as of the memory of a happier past, the speaker ends the poem in a bleak tone.

"Sate with life, what joys for me remain": Mehetabel Wright's "A Farewel to the World" (1736?)

This section closes with another melancholic poem by Mehetabel Wright. "A Farewel to the World"⁸⁶⁴ shows different literary influences such as the complaint of life, one of the most popular themes of early eighteenth-century melancholy poetry,⁸⁶⁵ and is regarded here as a type of self-elegy. This subtype of the elegy is often neglected, since it does not comply with the "ethical high-ground of mourning for a lost other, providing order to sorrow and a path to consolation even if unresolved."⁸⁶⁶ Instead, it emphasises the paradox of the poet-speaker embodying both the mourner as well as the mourned.⁸⁶⁷ Often judged as "deeply narcissistic,"⁸⁶⁸ the self-elegy is in fact highly

⁸⁶² The f-alliteration could be extended by "*Father*" in line 10, who appears to be another factor in the mother-speaker's grief and misfortune.

⁸⁶³ Through the amount of days the poem shows that it is to be understood as the sequel of Boyd's maternal elegy "On the Death of an Infant of five Days old, being a beautiful but abortive Birth", in the same volume.

⁸⁶⁴ For the entire poem, see Appendix, p. 307.

⁸⁶⁵ See Reed (1924), p. 38.

⁸⁶⁶ Sorum (2012), p. 93.

⁸⁶⁷ See Sorum (2012), p. 93.

⁸⁶⁸ Sorum (2012), p. 93.

self-reflective as well as deeply melancholic. Always grappling with one's own predicated absence,⁸⁶⁹ the self-elegist images him- or herself beyond the point of existence and thus transcends the poetic self beyond the point of ultimate melancholy – the termination of the self. Wright's poem is, however, not a typical self-elegy in the manner of, for example, Swift's "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" (1731/1739) or even Gray's "Elegy". Instead, it represents a mix of self-elegy, melancholic poetry, and nostalgic childhood reminiscence on the deathbed.

The publication history of "A Farewel to the World" is uncertain, since Wright's works have not received much critical attention yet. There are at least three different variants of this poem published in the course of the eighteenth century and the choice for a secure text basis is problematic. The poem was presumably first published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in October 1736 in a considerably expanded version and under a different title and name of author. Whether Wright instigated this publication – since she had used this periodical before on at least one prior occasion – or if the poem was pirated and published without her knowledge remains unclear. Later variants of the poem appeared, for instance, in *The Christian's Magazine* (Oct. 1762), and in nineteenth-century biographies of Wright's family, e.g. in Clarke's *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (1823). As Elspeth Knights has comprehensibly demonstrated, "A Farewel to the World" belonged to a group of several poems by Wright that "had been altered and consistently censored by her brothers and subsequent editors."⁸⁷⁰ Knights attempts to delineate these changes by comparing Wright's poems and their variants to a manuscript version of her works that had been discovered amongst the papers of Samuel Richardson, which Knights assesses to be "uncensored versions".⁸⁷¹ Generally, the female elegist mourns the final loss of her health and life by constructing a Golden-Age vision of her childhood and a

⁸⁶⁹ See Sorum (2012), p. 93.

⁸⁷⁰ Knights (1997), p. 16.

⁸⁷¹ Knights (1997), p. 16. How Richardson gained possession of the manuscript is not completely clear. Acc. to *Orlando*, Wright and Richardson might have met as early as 1724 (http://orlando.cambridge.org/protected/svPeople?formname=r&people_tab=3&person_id=wrigrme&crumbtrail=on&heading=c&t=6%3A47266#; last visit 30 May 2012). Knights (1997) refers to the fact that there is no record of communication between Richardson and Wright, but a number of mutual acquaintances, like the painter Joseph Highmore as well as the writers and editors John and William Duncombe (see 27). Knights's argument of authenticity hinges on the idea that Richardson received a manuscript over which Wright had exerted control, and which was hence uncensored. This is problematic insofar as she cannot prove whether Wright herself had given Richardson the poems in an authorised version. The specific variant of "A Farewel to the World" I have chosen for this study is based on the manuscript version retrieved from Richardson's papers and based on Knights's research. However, since the overall situation of the different variants cannot be disentangled entirely, I will briefly discuss the two main variants in terms of their poetic figurations of melancholy subsequent to the full-length analysis of the variant that I have chosen.

fictitious self within these memories. This fantastic past presents a foil for the speaker's contrasting reality, characterised by sickness and impending death.

The text opens in a surprisingly vehement manner – “While sickness rends this tenement of clay / Th' approaching change with rapture I survey” (ll. 1-2) – in which the persona splits herself between her sickened, deteriorating body (“the tenement of clay”; l. 1) and an independent psychological-emotional instance, like the soul or the self, whose observations and memories dominate the poem. However, the remembered childhood self is fictitious and is bound to the specific construction of these memories. “O'erjoy'd I reach the goal [...]” (l. 3), the speaker eagerly approaches and emphatically embraces a premature death (see l. 4) and is strangely relieved by the knowledge of having never to deal with the (side) effects of “sad old-age accurst / Of all our plagues, the heaviest and the worst!” (ll. 5-6). Equally emphatically, the speaker tries to evade her feminine duties of sustaining a fair and cheerful nature, when her ‘true’ outer and inner natures both appear to be wretched:

No longer man's wayward taste to please,
The hard constraint of seeming much at ease
Nor wear an outward smile, and look serene
While ruin racks and tortures lurk within. (ll. 7-10)

Possibly to tone down her former statements or to find a transition to the childhood memories, the speaker humbly turns towards a “Power that gives and takes away”, without further specifying whether this “Power” is divine in a Christian or rather pre-Christian or pagan sense.⁸⁷² The following flashback of nostalgic childhood recollections (ll. 15-63), which amplify the melancholic elements of the poem, forms the major part of the text's 36 couplets.⁸⁷³

The speaker's ardent wish for self-annihilation expresses a melancholic weariness with life. Not being restricted to this aspect of ‘melancholiness’, the influences of the speaker's childhood recollections serve to construe a pre-Romantic view of childhood innocence.⁸⁷⁴ This contemplation eventually leads to the image of the innocent child and recognition of childhood as a cherishable stage of life as manifest in Romantic poetry (e.g. Wordsworth's hallmark poem “Ode: Intimations of

⁸⁷² Later editions of the poem are less ambiguous at this point so that the lines explicitly refer “to my God” whose power the speaker emphatically “bless[es].” See, for instance, Clarke (1823/1836), vol. II, p. 307.

⁸⁷³ The 36 dominantly closed couplets express the emotions of a female individual rather than elaborating a general, philosophical or moral theme/question as it is more manifest in earlier decades of the century, e.g. in poems by Dryden or Pope.

⁸⁷⁴ For the Romanticist views on childhood and their repercussions in Romantic literature, see most recently, Ann Wierda Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (2012).

Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"; publ. 1807). In this poem, however, this construction restores the motif of the Golden Age, and thus the reign of Saturn, the ancient planet-god of melancholy.

Both aspects, the construction of childhood as the epitome of innocence, as well as the restoration of the Golden Age are closely connected to the nexus of the speaker's memory of that past and melancholy. In line with one of the most prominent characteristics of melancholy, namely constant reflection, the persona's recollections are deeply melancholic. On the one hand, they derive from a reflection (triggered by the loss of health and approaching death) and, in turn, reinforce the speaker's present melancholy over the loss of her alleged former life and self. On the other hand, due to the speaker's melancholically infested imagination, these memories are even more vivid and embellished through their retrieval – especially since these recollections are far more ambivalent than the persona acknowledges.

"Long shall my faithful memory retain / And oft recall the intervals of pain" (ll. 15-16), the speaker invokes her "faithful memory," against memory's immanent fleeting and volatile nature, and, thus, implicitly draws on the *topos* of the outstanding memory of the melancholic.⁸⁷⁵ At the same time, the poem questions the speaker's apparently "faithful memory." The rhymes of this couplet are of particular interest. Whereas the speaker invokes memory to recall the moments in-between the moments of pain ("the intervals of pain", l. 16), the text connects "retain" and "pain" through a stressed, masculine rhyme and thereby offers another reading: painful times in life seem to outweigh happier moments (which only occur in the intervals), and the text even defies the glossing over of painful memories by allegedly happy ones. Hence, the poem constantly remembers both painful and happy recollections, unwilling to accept the speaker's wishful striving to escape into a glorified – and thus not at all "faithful" – memory of a paradisiacal childhood.

These memories finally present themselves as a description of an idealised community intertwined with a pastoral landscape, or in different words: a rather conventional Golden Age fantasy. The harmonious interplay of human beings and nature exposes the fictitious as well as utopian character of the past and the fact that this age is forever lost. Again, the pre-Romantic impetus becomes apparent when the speaker recalls her respectable and "cheerful home" (l. 19), which radiates an atmosphere of rustic simplicity with morally elevated inhabitants. The speaker

⁸⁷⁵ For the excellent and at the same time capricious faculty of memory when afflicted with melancholy and its humoral causes, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), p. 35.

becomes part of this idealised, possibly familial community: “I’ve join’d the fair, the witty and the gay” (l. 23). The subsequent change from the first person singular to the first person plural, prevalent throughout these reminiscences, marks an important shift of the speaker’s social and emotional status. The moments when the speaker speaks exclusively for and about herself in the first person singular are strongly accompanied by solitude and melancholy. In contrast, when the first person plural is in effect, there are, at least superficially, signs of contentment, fervour, and sentimental feeling.

Work as a means of physical and moral improvement is celebrated as an essential basis for a morally good and virtuous life: “Our labour sweet, if labour it might seem; / Allowed the sportive and instructive scene” (ll. 23-24). Besides working, it is also learning – here in allegorised form in line 31 – that forms a central pillar of this fictitious virtuous society in which “Wit, mirth and music, sciences and arts, / Improv’d and exercis’d our mother [?] parts” (ll. 29-30).⁸⁷⁶ All in all, the speaker paints a picture of a community free of any social or emotional “base detraction” (l. 34) that is fortified against the proverbial ‘storms of life’, against which “We poiz’d the wav’ring sail with ballast sound” (l. 26).

Finding even “sublimar joy” (l. 35) and “Divine benevolence” (l. 36) in *caritas*, the community follows Christian as well as sentimental virtues:

Wan meagre forms, torn from impending death,
Exulting, blest us with reviving breath.
The shiv’ring wretch we cloth’d, the mourner cheer’d,
And sickness ceas’d to groan when we appear’d.
Unask’d, our care assists with tendrest art
Their bodies, nor neglects the immortal part. (37-42)

The clear separation between the sick and the healthy, between actual society and the speaker’s imagined alternative is most apparent in these lines and is further represented by the verses’ sentence structure. The description of the sick in contrast to the healthy, using “we” at the end of the respective couplet, combined with the reference to the beneficial influence of the carers confirms the Golden childhood memory as a remedy ‘from life’. In other words, this vision of the Golden Age is at once a remedy against and a reason for melancholy. The rhyme scheme reinforces this distinction between the sick and the healthy by connecting “death” (of the sick

⁸⁷⁶ In later editions, “mother parts” is replaced by the rather more plausible “nobler parts” and, therefore, connotes the head or the brain as the nobler parts of the body and mind. As the bracketed question mark already implies, Knights (1997) herself is uncertain as to whether the text in Richardson’s documents suggests “mother”.

other) with “breath” (like the spirit of life of the healthy “we”). In so doing, the poem is not just alluding to the respective health status of the groups, but also complementing the morally good and virtuous nature of the speaker and her preferred society.

The transition from the caring of the sick – for “Their bodies, nor neglects the immortal part [i.e. the soul; S.B.]” (l. 42) – to the pastoral setting is neat. The idealised image of nature matches and further underlines the community’s moral superiority. In “sylvan scenes” (l. 46), characterised by a play of light and shadow (see ll. 44-45), eternal spring (see l. 54), and surrounded by numerous flowers of various colours and fragrances (see ll. 51-54), the speaker and other members of this group blissfully dance and live in this pastoral setting in pure innocence and chastity and serve, above all, as role models for the rest of mankind:

Whole nature seems to heighten and improve
The halcyon hours in innocence and love.
Youth, wit, good nature, candour, sense, combin’d
To serve delight, and civilize mankind; (ll. 55-58)

The speaker herself is aware of the artificiality or constructedness of her supposed reminiscences. This becomes evident when she refers to “Paradise” as well as to the Ovidian Golden Age with regards to her imagined pastoral idyll:

In sylvan scenes, unrivall’d forms, we shone,
And glory’d in a Paradise our own:
In Wisdom’s love we ev’ry heart engage,
And triumph to restore the Golden Age! (ll. 59-62)

What appears as a memory of childhood bliss and pure happiness also carries a more ambivalent note. Although Ovid’s descriptions of the Golden Age undoubtedly laud it as the most desirable of all ages, it has nevertheless been traditionally associated with melancholy: firstly, due to its strong association to the *saturnia regna*, the reign of Saturn, the ancient planet-god of melancholy;⁸⁷⁷ secondly, because of the inevitability of the Golden Age being immanently lost. Due to its past status, the Golden Age is always a utopian construct and therefore cannot be restored at any future time. Hence, imaginings of the Golden Age usually carry a note of sadness and an awareness of permanent loss to mankind. The poem links the idea of the Golden Age to the age of childhood. Like the Ovidian age, childhood itself – then a discovery of a cultural and social movement still in its infancy –⁸⁷⁸ is similarly a

⁸⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of Saturn’s highly ambivalent role in the tradition of melancholy as the benevolent ruler of the Golden Age, on the one hand, and as the gloomy, dethroned god, on the other, see Klibansky et al. (1964/1979), pp. 133-137.

⁸⁷⁸ See Ariès (1960/1973).

history of loss: a period of the past one only remembers in faint traces and which cannot be restored. However, it is not only the loss of childhood which is bemoaned in these reminiscences; more importantly, the poet-speaker laments her loss of being a (healthy) member of society, of being part of a collective guarded from solitude and melancholy, and, finally, of being her 'essential' self.

The emotional difference between the collective and the individual becomes apparent (again) when the speaker shifts back to her present state which frames her Golden Age/childhood memories. Similar to the opening lines of the text, the ten closing verses of the poem reinforce the poet-speaker's ardent death wish. Invoking an "exhausted muse" (l. 63) to close the poem, the poet-speaker is surfeited by life – "Sate with life, what joys for me remain" (l. 65) – and knows that the only thing left to ask for is a death. "O'erwhelm'd I write, fatal ills, and hopeless all" (l. 67), she begs "speedy Fate with earnest Cries" (l. 68) to end her life.

Anticipating her death, she conjures the childhood-theme using a maternal metaphor that reinforces the interrelatedness of her present poetic-melancholic self with the fictitious self of her memories:

So peevish babes, whose wak'ing Hour is o'er,
When glitt'ring baubles can delight no more,
Recline the head, with sudden grief oppress,
Till borne by friendly Arms to welcome Rest. (ll. 69-72)

Alluding to the irretrievable loss of childhood and to contemporary experiences of maternal loss, she consequently closes the cycle of life as well as the poem on a rather peaceful but melancholy note.

The poem creates different melancholy scenarios associated with different forms of the self. Whereas the beginning and the end engage a self-lament characterised by sickness, impending death and the melancholic weariness of life of the poetic self, these parts also frame the imagined childhood memories of the poetic self that dominate the poem. These nostalgic reminiscences, which are contradicted by the poem itself, are relived by a fictitious version of the poetic self that is constructed through its Golden Age fancies, and especially through the highly melancholic notion of immanent loss and futile yearning. Thus, the elegist laments not only the loss of her health and of her childhood self, but she laments the loss of a life and an idea of her self she never actually experienced. The poem itself becomes the

embodiment of this imagined life and self that she praises and, at the same time, melancholically mourns.⁵⁷⁹

Résumé

In the process of differentiating our limited notion of female melancholic writing in the early eighteenth century, I have proposed to include poems that convey melancholy both in terms of formal structure as well as an affective experience, i.e. formal-experiential melancholic texts. In this context, the elegy, and especially the 'female' elegy, were considered important constituents for the remapping of women's melancholy poetry. I have specifically argued for the reinterpretation of the generic refusal of consolation associated with the 'female' elegy. This deferment of consolation is not only melancholic *per se*, but is also understood in terms of a discursively predetermined literary space that women writers appropriated in order to experiment with experiences of mourning and melancholy. Furthermore, they used this space to create new forms of poetic-melancholic female selves. For my analyses, I have adapted Ramazani's dynamic concept of "melancholic mourning", which provides a continuum between mourning and melancholy and so re-conceptualises the notion of elegy as both poetry of mourning *and* melancholy.

The selection of elegies encompasses different subtypes that were considered either 'typical' of women poets of the time, like familial elegies, or rather 'untypical' such as the occasional or public elegy. I have demonstrated different literary ways in which the elegies grapple with mourning and melancholy and what kinds of poetic selves they construct through the aestheticisation of emotional crises. My argument has been that these poetic selves are 'relational-melancholic', as they constitute themselves through both their social relations, which appear threatened through the loss the speakers are suffering, *and* the experience of grief and melancholy. As such,

⁵⁷⁹ Earlier variants of the poem severely differ from the variant I use for this study. Already the differences in length provide not only even more ways of reading the text, but also add further themes and topics as well as further nuances to existing topics. In terms of melancholy however, in "The Farewel. By a young Gentleman, who is dangerously ill" (*The Gentleman's Magazine* (Oct. 1736), p. 612) the impetus of the complaint of life (and its inherent melancholy) is far more pronounced, especially in the 15 additional verses at the beginning of the poem. This variant appears to be less personal and less subjective in some parts, and has a stronger emphasis on the issue of health at the end of the text. In later versions of the text, for instance in *The Christian's Magazine* (Oct. 1762, p.476), the poem varies especially in vocabulary and is then situated in a proper Christian context. Regarding the literary appropriation of melancholy, it is, especially towards the end of the poem, more explicit when the speaker asks death, not fate anymore, to draw her life to a close: "O'erwhelm'd with woes, desperate and fatal all, / On tardy death, with ceaseless cries I call" (ll. 59-60). Displaying typical symptoms of melancholy such as woe, despair, and, of course, the constant wish to die, enhance the visibility of melancholy. However, this variant does not do much with regard to my topic.

they present themselves within the social and cultural notions of femininity and as melancholic poets and form an important aspect of an eighteenth-century melancholic femininity. Thus, the subjective category of the second type of selves is strongly defined by introspection and reflection on emotional processes, but also, and dominantly so, by the selves' social positions, their functions, and their social beings.⁸⁸⁰

The analyses of these poems have delivered different shades of this particular type of poetic self-construction and a variety of different forms of melancholic mourning. Chudleigh's elegies – both public and familiar – demonstrate their precise knowledge of the generic conventions of the ('male') elegy. They question these formulaic forms of mourning and they create two different poetic relational-melancholic selves: as mourning daughter and mother, as well as the sympathetic observer (and national subject). In view of Chudleigh's elegy on Gloucester, the creation of the poetic-melancholic self is closely related to a moment of individualisation, in which the persona does not overcome the national grief over the prince's death, but increasingly identifies with the mourning mother as an act of sympathetic melancholic mourning. In Boyd's brief maternal elegy, we find a different form of individualisation of the poetic self. Here, the speaker initially paints a bigger picture of the social implications of child loss before she reflects and mourns her own situation and her own personal loss. Wright's elegies exemplify two borderline cases on the continuum between mourning and melancholic that Ramazani's concept proposes. The anticipatory mourning in her maternal elegy "To an Infant expiring the Second Day of its Birth" almost overshadows the melancholiness of the poem through the poetic fixation on the dying child and the subsequent lack of self-reflection. But Wright's self-elegy "A Farewel to the World" is highly melancholic both in terms of the construction of the poetic self and in terms of the poem itself: the persona mourns different and partly fictitious versions of her self, as well as lamenting the irrevocable loss of her health and life, which the melancholic text is left to testify.

Most elegies also manifest a 'melancholizing' reading dimension that varies in degrees. This effect is often achieved through the apostrophe of the deceased (or dying) and through the forceful and repeated imagining of, and living through, the

⁸⁸⁰ This does not come as a surprise if we consider that early eighteenth-century women did not enjoy a legal status of a subject or person, but were defined through their social ties to male relatives, see Schwalm 2007, p. 93 and Hobby (2008), n. pg. (see Introduction, FN 21).

various death-scenes the reader is forced to attend. Therefore, especially in these early stages of female melancholic writings, the many features of melancholy poetry, such as self-reflexivity, a melancholic reading dimension as well as the degree of the melancholy experience have to be understood as dynamic and not yet clearly defined.

Conclusion

The story of women's contribution to the literary tradition of melancholy in the eighteenth century is one of feminization and diversification.⁸⁸¹ In this study, I have illuminated the complex development of the configurations of melancholic femininity, and provided a wide-ranging, differentiated literary and cultural history of women's eighteenth-century melancholy writings. I have argued that the emergence of a female melancholy poetic 'tradition' was far more extensive and diverse, both in content and in generic representations, than previous studies of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry have accounted for. Moreover, I have shown that Augustan women's literary negotiations of melancholy both considerably contributed to and questioned the development of this literary tradition, thereby forcing us to rethink not only early eighteenth-century women's writings but also existing concepts of melancholy in past and present literature.

At first, there was the simple observation of how radically different women were perceived in the various discourses of melancholy in the course of the long eighteenth century. Considered marginally melancholic at best until 1680, the medical and cultural image of women was transformed to that of prime sufferers of all kinds of nervous disorders by 1750. The initial change in the perception of melancholic women was consolidated in the second half of that century. Consequently, this shift around 1680 engendered the increasing feminization and diversification of melancholy as a medical and cultural concept. This reciprocal process had several significant effects on the representation of women in terms of melancholy: eighteenth-century melancholy was now represented by numerous, hardly distinguishable nervous disorders and became a thoroughly feminised and fashionable malady of the over-refined members of the polite Georgian society (of both women and 'effeminate' men), as well as a virulent literary mood and mode. It is in the early eighteenth century, then, that the phenomenon of early modern melancholy became more productive for women writers. It is against this background of the radical transformation of the concept of melancholy in medical, cultural, literary discourses, as well as its diversification, feminization, and

⁸⁸¹ Therefore, it needs to be seen in the bigger eighteenth-century shift of feminization as Emma J. Clerly demonstrates in her convincing study *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England* (2004).

fashionability around 1700, that a new understanding of poetic configurations of female melancholy writings is developed in this study.

Medical and cultural processes ultimately triggered the increasing literary involvement of Augustan women writers with melancholy. They redefined their participation in and access to the literary tradition of melancholy poetry – a tradition that, according to recent scholarship, had been considered particularly difficult for women writers to attempt.⁸⁸² This study has discussed several ways in which women not only attempted but contributed to and questioned this literary tradition and mode. Moreover, as I have argued, women poets did not merely adopt melancholy as a suitable literary *sujet*, but appropriated the phenomenon as an important constituent of their poetic self-constructions, thus engendering new notions of a budding literary melancholic femininity.

There are numerous possible reasons for why these women should have had an increased interest in writing melancholy poetry.⁸⁸³ It has generally been argued that literature provides a rich language of emotions, imagery, and strategies to express experiences of melancholy more adequately than other discourses would.⁸⁸⁴ A more specifically historical argument, however, would be that it was women writers who especially profited from the broadening and popularising of the medical discourses of melancholy – despite the on-going pathologisation of the female sex: melancholy became a highly fashionable phenomenon of both popular medicine and culture, and as such also more accessible for women writers. In combination with the rise of sentimentalism and sensibility, which both promoted introspection and mild forms of melancholy as virtuous, melancholy became an increasingly accepted literary topic and mode. This gradually growing fashionability met with another favourable factor. Poetry was a viable form of female literary expression (at times even an expected feminine accomplishment),⁸⁸⁵ as it was “certainly the most conventional, genteel, and

⁸⁸² See most prominently Schiesari (1992).

⁸⁸³ Since author-immanent reasons can only be of a speculative nature, I provide more contextual, rather than personal reasons why the poets of this study might have turned towards melancholy.

⁸⁸⁴ See Bell (2011), p. 64. Bell names several other reasons for the eighteenth-century heightened interest in melancholy poetry, e.g. create sympathy in the reader, to compensate for the perceived inadequacy of melancholy's ‘discursive’ (i.e. non-literary) tradition (see 64), and finally argues: “The properly melancholy text acts as a companion, for the solitary melancholic who has none. By talking to us in the voice of the melancholic, fragmented and opened up, the text wrests us out of solitude and wins us back for life” (64). Since Bell's text does not consider the gender-perspective of melancholy, his reasons derive from and, in turn, fuel the very traditional notion of melancholy as the ‘condition’ of the male poetic genius.

⁸⁸⁵ This cultural ambivalence is exemplified in the two available role models for the Augustan woman writer: Katherine Philips (also known as ‘the Matchless Orinda’) and Aphra Behn (‘Astrea’), whose apparent social and cultural transgressions served as a negative foil against Philip's reputation as

respectable [genre]”⁸⁸⁶ and by far the most popular genre of eighteenth-century women writers.

In the literary tradition, melancholy signified an expressive literary tool to create authorship. At a time of emerging individualisation and early subjectivity, of a growing book market and the professionalization of writers, melancholy offered the recognised means of negotiating authorial selves. The existent image of the poet as a genteel amateur further corroborated women’s non-professional poetic demeanour. The women writers discussed in this study appropriated melancholy to construct their authorial subjectivities *within* these accepted social norms. They did not follow professional ambitions *via* melancholy⁸⁸⁷ and did not openly challenge gender expectations and norms through the melancholy gesture. After all, these women poets were not Aphra Behn, nor were they professional ‘women’ of letters.⁸⁸⁸

That this was about to change becomes palpable towards the end of the eighteenth century: After the late professionalization of the poet,⁸⁸⁹ women writers such as Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson increasingly used melancholy as powerful marketing strategies, representing their poetic personae as grief-stricken, melancholic women and (professional) poets raising the sympathy of their wide readership.⁸⁹⁰ The beginnings of this melancholic femininity, which is so consciously displayed in the poems by Smith and other Romantic women poets, are to be found in the early eighteenth century, as discussed in this study.

virtuous and chaste. For the discussion of the ambivalence of poem writing for women in the early eighteenth century, see Ballaster (2010), pp. 235-237. For poem writing as part of the expected accomplishments, see Backscheider (2008), p. 3. For a brief discussion of Philips and Behn as role models for eighteenth-century women writers, see Doody (2000), p. 218. For a general introduction to Augustan poetry, its topics, forms, and contexts see Margaret A. Doody’s *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (1985).

⁸⁸⁶ Stanton (1988) argues that 28.8% of all eighteenth-century women writers wrote poetry (see 249). Stanton’s article “Statistical Profile of Women Writing in English from 1660 to 1800” approximates how many women took up the pen, explores preferable genres, and defines factors such as the increasing literary and leisure, as well as the improved print technology for the steadily growing rate of women writers in the course eighteenth century.

⁸⁸⁷ In contrast to e.g. Thomas Gray, whose highly melancholic “Elegy” meditates the ambivalence of the poetic self’s ambition of individual and professional authorship and his loyalty to older forms of literary culture, see Hess (2005), p. 110.

⁸⁸⁸ The ‘more professional’ poets of this study, e.g. Carter and Singer Rowe, used other strategies to achieve a career within the limits of gender expectations and norms as has been discussed in chap. 3.2, p. 142 and p. 133.

⁸⁸⁹ See Zionkowski (2001), 187. Although the social and economic statuses of professional poets certainly altered in the course of the eighteenth century, this new concept was reserved for male poets as Zionkowski further points out: “Yet in Johnson’s day, this new configuration of poetic careers applied to men only, for as aristocratic models for literary production lost authority throughout the eighteenth century, they became associated with women’s writing [...]” (190).

⁸⁹⁰ For Smith’s and Robinson’s strategies of professionalization through melancholy, see Jacqueline M. Labbe’s article “Selling One’s Sorrows: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, and the Marketing of Poetry” (1994).

To gain a more detailed and comprehensive picture of these beginnings, melancholy as a cultural and literary phenomenon needs to be understood in more dynamic critical terms. Hence, I developed the idea of diversification and differentiation of melancholy writing by women poets as a central theme throughout this book. By concentrating on different thematic, formal, and generic features of women's melancholy poetry, I have reconsidered common and often too limited readings of melancholy texts.⁸⁹¹ To this end, poetic texts by women poets that do not seem to comply with our hermeneutic expectations of literary melancholy have been read here as literary manifestations of the melancholy experience. As a result, this study creates a more differentiated idea of Augustan and neoclassical female melancholic literary texts and their early forms of poetic self-constructions.

I have discussed the medical and cultural aspects of women's melancholy experience, as well as the paradigmatic shift in medical conceptions of melancholy from the humours to the nerves as the salient, pre-scientific explanation of body and mind. This shift had far-reaching implications for the wider cultural image of melancholy with regard to its gender specificity and to later literary manifestations in women's poetry. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Burton prototypically classified 'female melancholy' as a uterine disorder, which particularly befell socially marginalised and allegedly sexually deprived women. As such, it was a thoroughly sexualised disorder that – like other uterine disorders such as hysteria and chlorosis – was bound to women's reproductive systems and sexual activity. Subsequently, with the increasing prevalence of the nerves, uterine theories lost their influence and 'female melancholy' became a superfluous construct that conflated into other formerly uterine disorders, especially hysteria and vapours. Melancholy itself became both increasingly desexualised and feminised.⁸⁹² In line with former gender stereotypes, people with an especially 'weak' nervous constitution (i.e. nervous and "weak minded" women and effeminate, albeit refined men) were considered to be susceptible to this 'nervous melancholy'. However, the stereotypes that privileged masculinity and the cultural evaluation thereof stayed the same: while refined men turned into the culturally revaluated 'men of feeling', women were considered nervous, physically, and emotionally feeble and erratic.

⁸⁹¹ See chap. 3 in this study.

⁸⁹² See Hodgkin (2007), pp. 82-85.

With the shift from the humours to the nerves, the medical discourse of melancholy changed from a rather exclusive to a popular medico-cultural discourse. Owing to the eighteenth-century development of a growing book market, popular scientific manuals on the dealings of nervous disorders, such as Cheyne's *English Malady*, became an important medium for the cultural dissemination of melancholy.⁸⁹³ Melancholy's intrinsic medical as well as cultural nature and its evaluation certainly supported the idea of its fashionability and desirability among the genteel readership. This helped to implement the idea of 'refined nerves' and melancholy in the privileged social classes, which made melancholy culturally more accessible to (middle- and upper-class) women. While melancholic women were still primarily perceived in pathological terms, the shifting perception of melancholy as a female malady is clearly discernible. In the wider course of this process, melancholy became a more available literary discourse for early eighteenth-century women poets, which they adapted, negated, and renegotiated in their writings.

Conceptualising the full range of melancholy poetry by women writers, I have sketched a viable typology of melancholic literary writings based on Mathew Bell,⁸⁹⁴ and I have defined a range of literary constituents of melancholy poetry. The typology proposes adaptable categories that allow us to better comprehend literary texts that manifest and negotiate melancholy to varying degrees and on different textual levels. Reflecting the versatility of melancholy as a literary phenomenon allows us to read it in a different manner that goes beyond its conventional range and includes both "discursive" (i.e. non-literary) and literary melancholic texts. The latter category comprises "literary-discursive" and formal-experiential literary melancholy texts as opposite ends of the spectrum of their poetic practice.⁸⁹⁵ Crucial for literary melancholy texts is the poetic self that is constituted through the self-centred melancholy experience. The poetic-melancholic self is the central structure of melancholy literary writings. This categorical scheme of melancholy texts is a dynamic system that allows for more permeability between the categories: There is in fact no literary melancholy text that does not refer in some degree to non-literary traditions of melancholy.

⁸⁹³ Micale (2008) even argues that due to the growing and increasingly print-dominated medical marketplace and the constant monitoring of one's physical and mental health, the eighteenth century turned into the "first age of mass medicalized self-consciousness" (27).

⁸⁹⁴ See chap. 2.1, p. 76.

⁸⁹⁵ See Bell (2011), p. 56. See chap. 2.1, p. 79.

Traditional definitions of melancholy poetry have limited our hermeneutic expectations to a contemplative and pensive mode, an indulgence in melancholy as well as a hedonistic and sentimental delight of the sweetly-sad 'pleasures' of melancholy. It is against this background that this study remaps the literary landscape of melancholia. The traditional mapping rests on prototexts such as Milton's companion poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" and Gray's "Elegy." In this study, new territory is charted by reading selected poems by Augustan women writers as part of this tradition. These poems demonstrate a deep ambivalence ranging from resisting to revelling in melancholy. The poetic-melancholic selves construed in these texts share traits of a melancholic femininity, which blends traditional elements of literary melancholy with socially and culturally feminine virtues, thereby challenging established male melancholic subjectivities.

The female personae in these poems represent a range of highly diverse melancholic-poetic selves. On the one hand, the selves in the poems by Finch, Leapor and Singer Rowe tend towards a desire for social disengagement and withdrawal in order to merge with melancholy. This literary identification with melancholy, however, is not used to elevate the poetic self to culturally desirable melancholic subjectivities (e.g. the ingenious poet). It rather displays melancholy's ambiguity in the sense that they both resist and revel in the experience of melancholy. On the other hand, the poems by Knight and Carter evoke the traditional Janus-faced nature of melancholy. Their poetic selves both underline conventional notions of melancholy and integrate distinctive ideas of melancholic femininity such as moderation or religiosity.

Wharton's poem – whose title "In soft Complaint no longer ease I find" is considered 'symptomatic' for this study – displays the ambiguity between the defiance of melancholy and indulgence of melancholy while marking the poetic as an insufficient literary medium. The poem's obvious resistance to melancholy, accompanied by an underlying flirtation with it, epitomises most of the poems' inherent ambivalence towards this literary tradition. They can be clearly recognised as part of this tradition through their usage of melancholic imagery, self-reflexivity, and introspection. Yet they extend our limited understandings of melancholy poetry by neither completely resisting nor revelling in melancholy, but taking a more ambivalent stance between both extremes.

One of the main innovations of this study has been to include eighteenth-century women's literary expression of melancholy that was triggered through the experience of loss. Thus, melancholy's literary map has been extended and refined. I

argue that due to the generic refusal of consolation in 'female' elegies they should not only be considered melancholic *per se*, but that they provide a discursively predetermined and thus culturally accepted literary space. Here, early eighteenth-century women writers could experiment with the experiences of mourning and melancholy, creating different forms of poetic-melancholic selves in relation to their social roles. This argument pursues the larger process of melancholic literature's diversification and differentiation in a twofold way: firstly, eighteenth-century mourning and melancholy are considered two highly permeable emotional states, each determining the other. Secondly, my argument stresses the necessity to read elegies by Augustan women writers as part of the literary tradition of melancholy. The poetic selves construed through the aestheticisation of the personae's emotional crises of loss are relational-melancholic selves. They form early versions of a poetic melancholic femininity that would be fully manifest towards the end of the century. Read against Ramazani's concept of "melancholic mourning,"⁸⁹⁶ the selected elegies show that the poetic selves do not only oscillate between mourning and melancholy, but also tend to shift in their positions as individuals and in relation to others. This becomes apparent in Chudleigh's public elegy "On the Death of His Highness the Duke of *Glocester*" and Wright's self-elegy "A Farewel to the World". Chudleigh's poetic self is constructed and individualised through her refusal of national, collective consolation and through her 'sympathetic melancholy' with the mourning mother. Wright's self-elegy, by contrast, creates a melancholic version of a poetic self through the creation of highly idealised and nostalgic recollections of the elegist's alleged childhood, as well as her experience of impending death. Both of these elements in Wright's poem designate the poetic self as completely unrelated to others in its construction, especially since the memories of the persona's childhood self are based on melancholic distortions of the past.

In familial elegies the experience of melancholic mourning forms one constituent of poetic self-representation. Other constituents are the experience of being an orphaned mother or daughter. Here, the social function and position is a paramount factor for poetic self-construction. In Chudleigh's and Boyd's maternal poems, the poetic self's relatedness at times outweighs the experience of melancholy. There are and must be limits to reading 'female' elegies as poems of melancholy, as the reading of Wright's maternal elegy shows. Despite its melancholic strategies such as the

⁸⁹⁶ See chap. 4.2, p. 191.

melancholizing reading effect and the imprisonment of the self in the moment of effacement (of the self and her child), the anticipatory mourning and the desperate clinging to the child dominate the poetic self and hamper any potential melancholic self-reflection. My reading of the poem demonstrates that even though 'female' elegies have a general proclivity towards melancholy, this argument still needs to be carefully assessed for each case.

In 'female' elegies, melancholy is a completely acceptable element. It is not an act of transgression, but a socially and culturally accepted and expected way to grapple with the experience of loss. Early eighteenth-century 'female' elegies thus create poetic selves that deal with the experience of loss and of death, and question the balance between mourning and melancholy. They illustrate that there are various literary forms in which melancholic experiences were negotiated by Augustan women writers. Reading the 'female' elegy as a melancholic poem extends our notions of eighteenth-century melancholy poetry and provides a novel perspective on the ongoing debate around the gendering of melancholy.

As mentioned above, especially the examples of 'female' elegies are part of the beginnings of a literary melancholic femininity that would achieve an unknown popularity towards the end of the century. The rapid progression of melancholy's feminine turn was significantly influenced by the virulence of the cult of sensibility, its generally feminising undercurrent, and an emphasis on feeling as well as the surge of melancholy poems in this context.⁸⁹⁷ Next to the mid-eighteenth-century moral philosophical debates on passions and sentiments, most decisively in the treatises of David Hume and his conception of emotions,⁸⁹⁸ it was especially Burke's highly influential *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) that strengthened the linkage between the feminine and melancholy. By aligning the aesthetic experience of the beautiful with the feminine (whereas the sublime is allocated to the masculine), to which he applies several defining features such as smallness, delicacy, and "softer virtues,"⁸⁹⁹ Burke not only significantly shapes

⁸⁹⁷ For the importance of sensibility in the cultural discourses of melancholy, see chap. 3.1, p. 106ff.

⁸⁹⁸ See Mellor (2010), p. 451. For an excellent discussion on Hume's epistemology of emotions in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1749) and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), see Pinch (1996), pp. 17-50.

⁸⁹⁹ For Burke's (1757) summary of the characteristics of the beautiful, see p. 103f. For the ways in which the beautiful affects the qualities of the mind are discussed in Burke's treatise, see part. III, sect. X, here p. 92.

the idea of the ‘ideal woman,’⁹⁰⁰ he also concludes that the aesthetic experience of the beautiful is one closely related to melancholy: “The passion excited by beauty is in fact nearer to a species of melancholy, than to jollity and mirth.”⁹⁰¹

Burke’s equating of melancholy with beauty (and hence the feminine) provides an important foundation for the pre-Romantic literary development of the ‘female’ elegy as a major genre of female melancholic writing.⁹⁰² By the late eighteenth-century, melancholy had evolved into a prime marker of poetic self-constructions in women’s elegies, whose subjective potential was fully embraced by Romantic women poets.

Just how radically different their appropriation of poetic melancholy was becomes evident in the case of Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784-97).⁹⁰³ Not only does Smith present herself in her prefaces as a highly melancholic poet, and at times as a melancholic mother, but the poems themselves – a challenging poetic form blending elegiac elements with the Italian and English sonnet traditions – display an aesthetic range of melancholic manifestations and versions of the poetic self that was unknown in female poetry until then.⁹⁰⁴ And yet, although Smith and her poetry are undoubtedly perceived and celebrated as deeply melancholic by her readership and literary critics, there was a new ambivalence towards female melancholic writing: Due to the general surfeit of late eighteenth-century sentimental-melancholy poetry, Smith’s poems added to a weariness of this kind of writing among readers. The eighteenth century assured the accessibility of melancholy as a cultural phenomenon, a literary subject and a means of poetic self-construction for generations of women poets to come; but it also confronted them with a difficult legacy of nervous pathology, cultural and social ambiguity as well as literary traditions that eighteenth-century women poets had copiously contributed towards and which had ultimately

⁹⁰⁰ Mellor (1993), p. 107ff.

⁹⁰¹ Burke (1757), p. 113. This melancholic sentiment of beauty he describes in more detail as “that sinking, that melting, that languor [...] is the characteristical effect of the beauty” (113).

⁹⁰² For the discussion of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ‘female’ elegies as a poetry of grief and literary expression of the construction of women’s social conditions, see Mellor (2010), p. 451ff.

⁹⁰³ For Smith’s poems as a reaction to Hume and Burke, see Mellor (2010), p. 451 as well as Pinch (1996), p. 51ff.

⁹⁰⁴ Although Smith highlights her melancholy already in the prefaces to the first and second edition of the *Elegiac Sonnets*, it is especially in the preface of the sixth edition (1792) in which she specifically fashions herself as melancholic “Authoress” (Smith (1993), p. 5). For a critical discussion of the appropriation and use in Smith’s poetry and authorial construction, see Elizabeth Dolan, “British Romantic Melancholia: Charlotte Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets*, medical Discourse and the Problem of Sensibility” (2003) and Kathryn Pratt, “Charlotte Smith’s Melancholia on the Page and Stage” (2001). For Smith as a melancholic, also see Harrison (2011), pp. 178-214.

paved the way for a new, highly self-conscious notion of melancholic femininity that Romantic women writers would turn to in their poetry.

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**“In soft Complaints no longer Ease I find”:
Poetic Configurations of Melancholy
by Early Eighteenth-Century Women Poets.**

APPENDIX

Anne Finch, "The Spleen. A Pindarik Poem"

What art thou, *SPLEEN*, which ev'ry thing dost ape?
Thou *Proteus* to abus'd Mankind,
Who never yet thy real Cause cou'd find,
Or fix thee to remain in one continued Shape.
5 Still varying thy perplexing Form,
Now a Dead Sea thou'lt represent,
A Calm of stupid Discontent,
Then, dashing on the Rocks wilt Rage into a Storm.
Trembling sometimes thou dost appear,
10 Dissolved into a Panick Fear;
On Sleep intruding dost thy Shadows spread,
Thy gloomy Terroures round the silent Bed,
And croud with boading dreams the Melancholy Head;
Or, when the Midnight Hour is told,
15 And drooping Lids thou still dost waking hold,
Thy fond Delusions cheat the Eyes,
Before them antick Spectres dance,
Unusual Fires their pointed Heads advance,
And airy Phantoms rise.
20 Such was the monstrous *Vision* seen,
When *Brutus* (now beneath his Cares opprest,
And all *Rome's* Fortunes rolling in his Breast,
Before *Philippi's* latest Field,
Before his Fate did to *Octavius* lead)
25 Was vanquished by the *Spleen*.

Falsely, the Mortal Part we blame
Of our deprest, and pond'rous Frame,
Which, till the First degrading Sin
Let Thee, its dull Attendant, in,
30 Still with the other did comply,
Nor clogg'd the Active Soul, dispos'd to fly,
And range the Mansions of it's native Sky.
Nor, whilst in his own Heaven he dwelt,
Whilst Man his Paradice possest,
35 His fertile Garden in the fragrant east,
And all united Odours smelt,
No armed Sweets, until thy Reign,
Cou'd shock the Sense, or in the Face
A flusht, unhandsom Colour place.
40 Now the *Jonquille* o'ercome the feeble Brain;
We faint beneath the Aromatick Pain,
Till some offensive Scent thy Pow'rs appease,
And Pleasure we resign for short, and nauseous Ease.

In ev'ry One thou dost possess,
45 New are thy Motions, and thy Dress:
Now in some Grove a list'ning Friend
Thy false Suggestions must attend,
Thy whisper'd Griefs, thy fancy'd Sorrows hear,
Breath'd in a Sigh, and witness'd by a Tear;
50 Whilst in the light, and vulgar Croud,
Thy Slaves, more clamorous and loud,
By Laughter unprovok'd, thy Influence too confess.
In the imperious *Wife* thou Vapours art,
Which from the o'erheated Passions rise

- 55 In clouds to the attractive Brain,
 Until descending thence again,
 Thro' the o'er-cast, and show'ring Eyes,
 Upon her Husband's soften'd Heart,
 He the disputed Point must yield,
60 Something resign of the contested Field;
 Till Lordly *Man*, born to Imperial Sway,
 Compounds for Peace, to make the Right away,
 And *Woman*, arm'd with *Spleen*, do's servilely Obey.
- The *Fool*, to imitate the Wits,
65 Complains of thy pretended Fits,
 And Dulness, born with him, wou'd lay
 Upon thy accidental Sway;
 Because, sometimes, thou dost presume
 Into the ablest Heads to come:
70 That, often, Men of Thoughts refin'd,
 Impatient of unequal Sence,
 Such slow Returns, where they so much dispense,
 Retiring from the Croud, are to thy Shades inclin'd.
 O'er me alas! thou dost too much prevail:
85 I feel thy Force, whilst I against thee rail;
 I feel my Verse decay, and my crampt Numbers fail.
 Thro' thy black Jaundice I all Objects see,
 As dark, and terrible as Thee,
 My Lines decry'd, and my Employment thought
80 An useless Folly, or presumptuous Fault:
 Whilst in the *Muses* Paths I stray,
 Whilst in their Groves, and by their secret Springs
 My Hand delights to trace unusual Things,
 And deviates from the known, and common way;
85 Nor will in fading Silks compose
 Faintly th' inimitable *Rose*,
 Fill up an ill-drawn *Bird*, or paint on Glass
 The *Sov'reign's* blurr'd and undistinguishable Face,
 The threatening *Angel*, and the speaking *Ass*.
- 90 Patron thou art to ev'ry gross Abuse,
 The sullen *Husband's* feign'd Excuse,
 When ill Humour with his Wife he spends,
 And bears recruited Wit, and Spirits to his Friends.
 The Son of *Bacchus* pleads thy Pow'r,
 As to the Glass he still repairs,
 Pretends but to remove thy Cares,
 Snatch from thy Shadows one gay, and smiling Hour,
 And drown thy Kingdom in a purple Show'r.
 When the *Coquette*, whom ev'ry Fool admires,
100 Wou'd in Variety be Fair,
 And, changing hastily the Scene
 From Light, Impertinent, and Vain,
 Assumes a soft, a melancholy Air,
 And of her Eyes rebates the wand'ring Fires,
105 The careless Posture, and the Head reclin'd,
 The thoughtful, and composed Face,
 Proclaiming the withdrawn, the absent Mind,
 Allows the Fop more liberty to gaze,
 Who gently for the tender Cause inquires;

- 110 The Cause, indeed, is a Defect in Sense,
Yet is the *Spleen* alleg'd, and still the dull Pretence,
But these are thy fantastic Harms,
The Tricks of thy pernicious Stage,
Which doe the weaker Sort engage;
115 Worse are the dire Effects of thy more pow'rful Charms.
By Thee, *Religion*, all we know,
That should enlighten here below,
Is veil'd in Darkness, and perplext
With anxious Doubts, with endless Scruples vex't,
120 And some Restraint imply'd from each perverted Text.
Whilst *Touch* not, *Taste* not, what is freely giv'n,
Is but thy niggard Voice, disgracing bounteous Heav'n.
From Speech restrain'd, by thy Deceits abus'd,
To Deserts banish'd, or in Cells reclus'd,
125 Mistaken Vot'ries to the Pow'rs Divine,
Whilst they are purer Sacrifice design,
Do but the *Spleen* obey, and worship at thy Shrine.
In vain to chase thee ev'ry Art we try,
In vain all Remedies apply,
130 In vain the *Indian* Leaf infuse,
Or the parch'd *Eastern* Berry bruise;
Some pass, in vain, those Bounds, and nobler Liquore use.
Now *Harmony*, in vain, we bring,
Inspire the Flute, and touch the String.
135 From Harmony no Help is had;
Musick but soothes thee, if too sweetly sad,
And if too light, but turns thee gayly Mad.
Tho' the Physicians greatest Gains,
Altho' his growing Wealth he sees
140 Daily increas'd by Ladies Fees
Yet dost thou baffle all his studious Pains.
No skilful *Lower* thy Source cou'd find,
Or thro' the well-dissected Body trace
The secret, the mysterious ways,
145 By which thou dost surprise, and prey upon the Mind.
Tho' in the Search, too deep for Human Thought,
With unsuccessful Toil he wrought,
'Till thinking Thee to've catch'd, Himself by thee was caught,
Retain'd thy Pris'ner, thy acknowledg'd Slave,
150 And sunk beneath thy Chain to a lamented Grave.

(From: Anne Finch: *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*. Ed. Myra Reynolds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903. 248-252.)

Diagram of humours (Fig. 1)

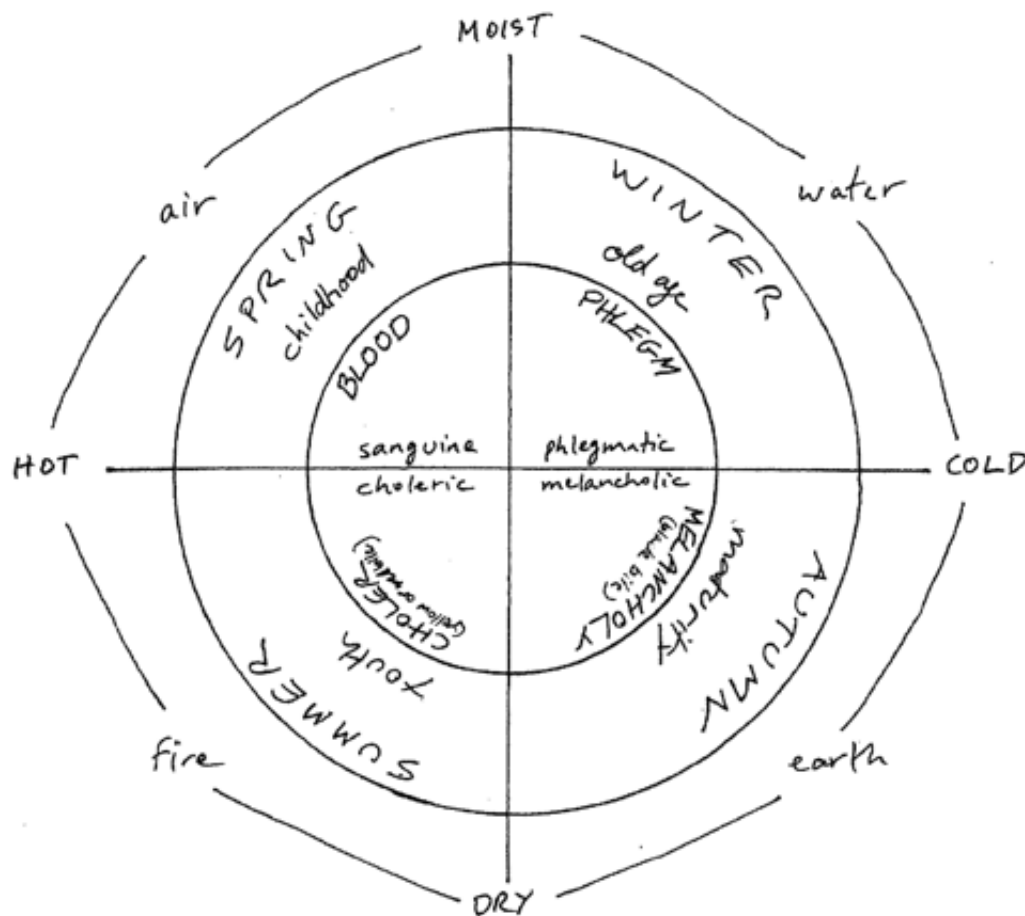
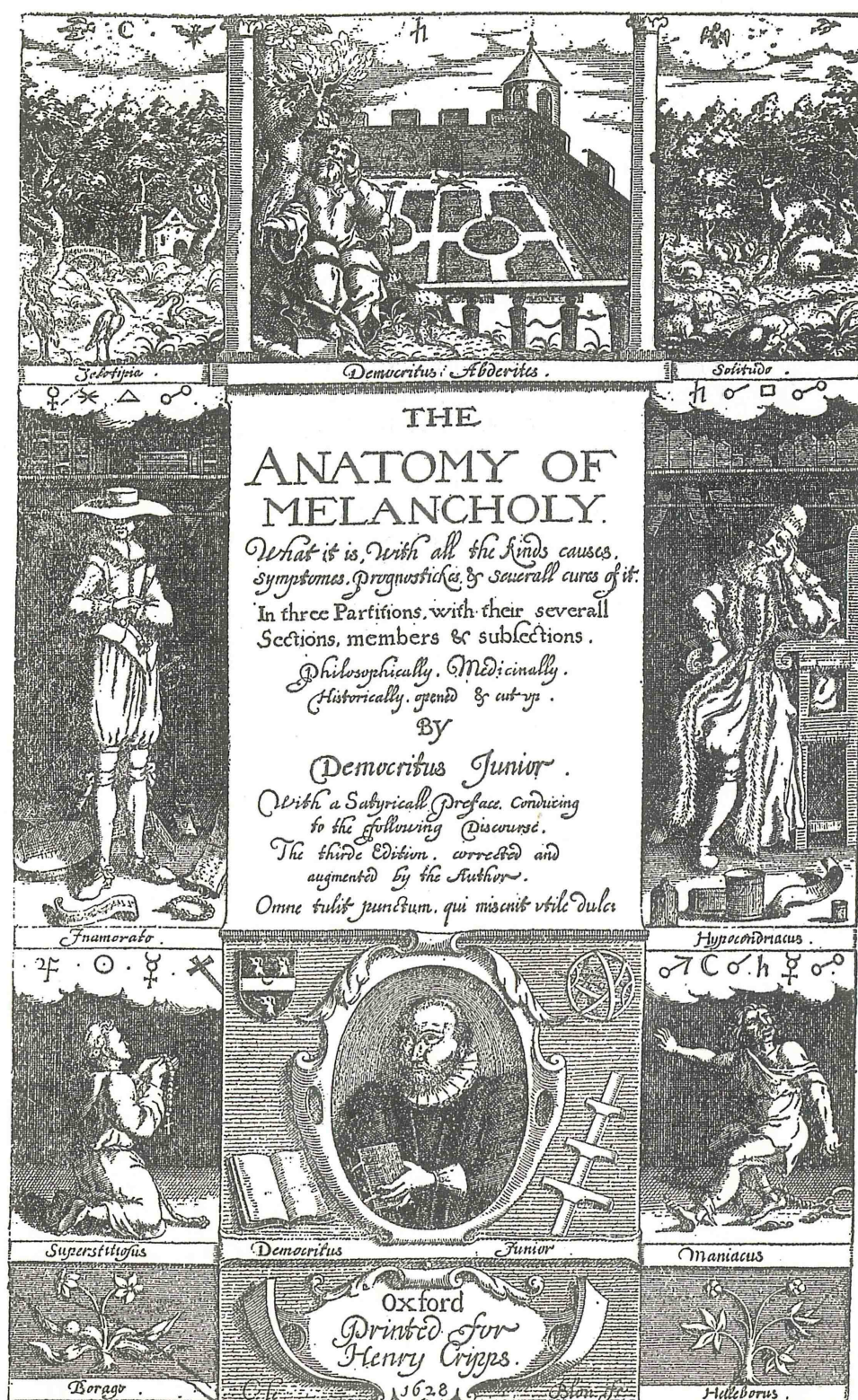


Fig 1. Diagram of humours, elements, qualities, and seasons. To each humoral category would eventually correspond also a time of day, a Color, a taste, a type of fever, a main organ, governing musical modes, a tutelary planet, and a set of astrological signs. Blood: morning; red; sweet; continuous fever; heart; lydian and hypolydian modes; Jupiter; Gemini, Libra, Aquarius. Cholera: midday; yellow; bitter; tertiary fever; spleen; phrygian and hypophrygian modes; Mars; Aries, Leo, Sagittarius. Melancholy: afternoon; black; sour; quartan fever; liver; mixolydian and hypomixolydian modes; Saturn; Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn. Phlegm: evening; white; salty; quotidian fever; brain; dorian and hypodorian modes; Moon; Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces.

(From: Noga Arikha: *Passions and Tempers. A History of the Humours*. New York, etc.: Harper Perennial, 2007. 11.)

Male Melancholic Subjectivities (Fig. 2)



(From: Robert Burton: The Anatomy of Melancholy. 1621. Ed. Holbrook Jackson. New York: New York Review Books, 2001. 9.)

Anne Wharton, "To Melpomene Against Complaint"

1 In soft Complaints no longer ease I find,
 That latest refuge of a Tortur'd Mind;
 Romantick Heros may their Fancy please
 In telling of their Griefs to senceless Trees.
5 Tis now to me no Pleasure to rehearse
 A doleful Tale in Melancholy Verse!
 Men are more Deaf than Trees, more Wild than Seas:
 Complaints and Tears will sooner Storms appease,
 Than draw soft Pity from an Human Breast.
10 All Sooth the Happy, and Despise the Opprest.
 each Man who lives, of sorrow hath his share,
 Or else of Pride, and cannot pity spare,
 For those whose weight is more than one can bear.
 All who are happy, do their Merit boast,
15 Think Heaven owes 'em more, and Heav'n is Just.
 Still they observe the Opprest with Partial Eyes,
 And think their Crimes draw Vengeance from the Skies.
 But were they gentle, pitiful, and mild,
 Not (as they are) rough, unconcern'd and wild.
20 What Joy can pity bring on other's Grief?
 For what I feel, affords me no relief;
 To see another's Eyes with pity melt,
 For wretched me, would add to what I felt.
 Since in Complaints there can no ease be found,
25 For such an Heart as mine in sorrow drown'd.
 Sleep, sleep, *Melpomene*, thou mournful Muse:
 For of my Torments, I will thee accuse.
 I'll say thou keep'st 'em waking with thy Charms,
 And drives soft slumbers from my Longing Arms.
30 Sleep, sleep, my Muse, and let my Cares alone;
 But if thou wilt not, since thy Harp is strung,
 Attend a while, and, like a dying swan,
 My latest Accents shall be sweetly sung.

(From: Anne Wharton: *The Surviving Works of Anne Wharton*. Ed. Germaine Greer and Susan Hastings. Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1997. 129-130.)

Anne Finch, "Ardelia to Melancholy"

- At last, my old inveterate foe,
No opposition shalt thou know.
Since I, by struggling can obtain
Nothing, but encrease of pain,
5 I will att last, no more do soe,
Tho' I confesse, I have apply'd
Sweet mirth, and musick, and have try'd
A thousand other arts beside,
To drive thee from my darken'd breast,
10 Thou, who hast banish'd all my rest.
But, though sometimes, a short reprieve they gave,
Unable they, and far too weak, to save;
All arts to quell, did but augment thy force,
As rivers check'd, break with a wilder course.
- 15 Freindship, I to my heart have laid,
Freindship, th' applauded sov'rain aid,
And thought that charm so strong wou'd prove,
As to compell thee, to remove;
And to myself, I boasting said,
20 Now I a conqu'rer sure shall be,
The end of all my conflicts, see,
And noble tryumph, wait on me;
My dusky, sullen foe, will sure
N'er this united charge endure.
25 But leaning on this reed, ev'n whilst I spoke
It pierc'd my hand, and into peices broke.
Still, some new object, or new int'rest came
And loos'd the bonds, and quite disolv'd the claim.
- 30 These failing, I invok'd a Muse,
And Poetry wou'd often use,
To guard me from thy Tyrant pow'r;
And to oppose thee ev'ry hour
New troops of fancy's, did I chuse.
Alas! in vain, for all agree
35 To yeild me Captive up to thee,
And heav'n, alone, can sett me free.
Thou, through my life, wilt with me goe,
And make ye passage, sad, and slow.
All, that cou'd ere thy ill gott rule, invade,
40 Their useless arms, before thy feet have laid;
The Fort is thine, now ruin'd all within,
Whilst by decays without, thy Conquest too is seen.

(From: Anne Finch: *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*. Ed. Myra Reynolds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903. 15-16.)

Elizabeth Singer Rowe, "Despair"

OH! lead me to some solitary gloom,
Where no enliv'ning beams, nor chearful echoes come;
But silent all, and dusky let it be,
Remote and unfrequented, but by me;
5 Mysterious, close, and sullen as that grief,
Which leads me to its covert for relief.
Far from the busy world's detested noise,
Its wretched pleasures, and distracted joys;
Far from the jolly fools, who laugh, and play,
10 And dance, and sing, impertinently gay,
Their short, inestimable hours away;
Far from the studious follies of the great,
The tiresome farce of ceremonious state:
There, in a melting, solemn, dying strain,
15 Let me, all day, upon my lyre complain,
And wind up all its soft harmonious strings,
To noble, serious, melancholy things,
And let no human foot, but mine, e'er trace
The close recesses of the sacred place:
20 Nor let a bird of chearful note come near,
To whisper out his airy raptures here.
Only the pensive songstress of the grove,
Let her, by mine, her mournful notes improve;
While drooping winds among the branches sigh,
25 And sluggish waters heavily roll by.
Here, to my fatal sorrows let me give
The short remaining hours I have to live,
Then, with a sullen, deep-fetch'd groan expire,
And to the grave's dark solitude retire.

(From: Elizabeth Singer Rowe: *The Miscellaneous Works in Prose and Verse of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe*. [...]. London: [...], 1739. Vol. 2. 71-72.)

Elizabeth Carter, "Ode to Melancholy"

Ἰὼ Σχυντος εἰμον φάος, ἐρεμῖος
 Ὡ φάενον ὡς εἰμοί
 Ἐλεσθ', ἐλεσθ', οὐκητορα
 Ἐλεσθ' εἰ μ' -----⁹⁵

SOPHOCLES

COME Melancholy! silent Pow'r,
 Companion of my lonely Hour,
 To sober Thought confin'd:
 Thou sweet-sad ideal Guest,
 5 In all Thy soothing Charms confest,
 Indulge my pensive Mind.

No longer wildly hurried thro'
 The Tides of Mirth, that ebb and flow,
 In Folly's noisy Stream:
 10 I from the busy Croud retire,
 To court the Objects that inspire
 Thy philosophic Dream.

Thro' yon dark Grove of mournful Yews
 With solitary Steps I muse,
 15 By thy Direction led:
 Here, cold to Pleasure's tempting Forms,
 Consociate with my Sister-worms,
 And mingle with the Dead.

Ye Midnight Horrors! Awful Gloom!
 20 Ye silent Regions of the Tomb,
 My future peaceful Bed:
 Here shall my weary Eyes be clos'd,
 And ev'ry Sorrow lie repos'd
 In Death's refreshing Shade.

25 Ye pale Inhabitants of Night,
 Before my intellectual Sight
 In solemn Pomp ascend:
 O tell how trifling now appears
 The Train of idle Hopes and Fears
 30 That varying Life attend.

Ye faithless Idols of our Sense,
 Here own how vain your fond Pretence,
 Ye empty Names of Joy!
 Your transient Forms like Shadows pass,
 35 Frail Offspring of the magic Glass,
 Before the mental Eye.

The dazzling Colours, falsely bright,
 Attract the gazing vulgar Sight

⁹⁵ "Alas! shades of night, my day, / O darkness, light to me, / Take, oh take me away to dwell with you, / Take me away. -----" Translated by Montagu Pennington (qtd. in *Bluestocking Feminism*, Vol. 2 (1999), p. 445).

- With superficial State:
 40 Thro' Reasons clearer Optics view'd
 How stript of all it's Pomp, how rude
 Appears the painted Cheat.
- Can wild Ambition's tyrant Pow'r,
 Or ill-got Wealth's superfluous Store,
 45 The Dread of Death controul?
 Can Pleasure's more bewitching Charms
 Avert, or sooth the dire Alarms
 That shake the parting Soul?
- Religion!* E'er the Hand of Fate
 50 Shall make Reflexion plead too late,
 My erring Senses teach,
 Admidst the flatt'ring Hopes of Youth,
 To mediate the solemn Truth,
 The awful Relics preach.
- Thy penetrating Beams disperse
 The Mist of Error, whence our Fears
 Derive their fatal Spring:
 'Tis thine the trembling Heart to warm,
 And soften to an Angel Form
 60 The pale terrific King.
- When sunk by Guilt in sad Despair,
Repentance breathes her humble Pray'r
 And owns thy Threat'nings just:
 Thy Voice the shudd'ring Suppliant cheers,
 65 With *Mercy* calms her tort'ring Fears,
 And lifts her from the Dust.
- Sublim'd by thee, the Soul aspires
 Beyond the Range of low Desires,
 In nobler Views elate:
 70 Unmoved her destin'd Change surveys,
 And arm'd by Faith, intrepid pays
 The universal Debt.
 In Death's soft Slumber lull'd to Rest,
 She sleeps by smiling Visions blest,
 75 That gently whisper Peace:
 'Till the last Morn's fair op'ning Ray
 Unfolds the bright eternal Day
 Of active Life and Bliss.

(From: *Bluestocking Feminism. Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785. Volume 2, Elizabeth Carter*. Ed. Judith Hawley. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1990. 351-353.)

Henrietta Knight, "Written to a near Neighbour in a tempestuous Night 1748"

I.

YOU bid my Muse not cease to sing,
You bid my ink not cease to flow;
Then say it ever shall be spring,
And boisterous winds shall never blow:
5 When you such miracles can prove,
I'll sing of friendship, or of love.

II.

But now, alone, by storms opprest,
Which harshly in my ears resound;
No chearful voice with witty jest,
10 No jocund pipe to still the sound;
Untrain'd beside in verse-like art,
How shall my pen express my heart?

III.

In vain I call th' harmonious Nine,
In vain implore Apollo's aid:
15 Obdurate, they refuse a line,
While spleen and care my rest invade;
Say, shall we Morpheus next implore,
And try if dreams befriend us more?

IV.

Wisely at least he'll stop my pen,
20 And with his poppies crown my brow:
Better by far in lonesome den
To sleep unheard of --- than to glow
With treach'rous wildfire of the brain,
Th' intoxicated poet's bane.

(From: *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes. By several Hands.* Ed. Robert Dodsley. London, 1758. Vol. 4. 309-310.)

Mary Leapor, "The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness"

1 Still were the Groves, and venerable Night
O'er half the Globe had cast her gloomy Veil,
When by a Taper's solitary Gleam
Sat musing *Mira* pensive and alone
5 In her sad Breast officious Memory
Reviv'd the Pictures of departed Friends,
Whose pleasing Forms she must behold no more.
Forgotten Woe, that for a time had slept,
Rose into Life, and like a Torrent pour'd
10 On her faint Soul, which sunk beneath its Rage:
At length soft Slumber kindly interven'd,
And clos'd those Eye-lids that were drench'd in Tears;
But restless Fancy that was waking still,
Let my deluded Spirits on the Wing
15 To pictur'd Regions and imagin'd Worlds.
I seem'd transported to a gloomy Land,
Whose Fields had never known the chearful Sun:
A heavy Mist hung in the frowning Sky,
No feather'd Warblers chear'd the mourning Groves,
20 Nor blushing Flow'rs adorn'd the barren Ground:
I gaz'd around the solitary Coast,
When lo a Nymph with solemn Air approach'd,
Whose Dress was careless and her Features grave,
Her Voice was broken and her Hearing dull:
25 She spoke but seldom, yet at last she told
Me in a Whisper, That her Name was Thought;
And more, she offer'd, with a friendly Air,
To lead me safely through the dreary Gloom:
we walk'd along through rough unpleasing Paths;
30 O'er Beds of Night-Shade and through Groves of Yew,
Till we arriv'd within a dusky Wood,
Whose spacious Bound was fenc'd with shagged Thorn.
The Trees were baleful Cypress; and a few
Tall Pines that murmur'd to the rushing Wind:
35 Here dwelt the Natives, (mournful as the Place)
Or sunk in real or imagin'd Woe;
Complaining Sounds were heard on ev'ry Side,
And each bewail'd the loss of something dear:
Some mourn'd a Child that in its Bloom expir'd,
40 And some a Brother's or a Parent's Fate:
Lost Wealth and Honours many Tongues deplor'd,
And some were wretched, tho' they knew not why.
But as we reach'd the centre of the Place,
Complaints were heard more piercing than before:
45 The gathering Fogs grew thicker o'r our Heads,
And a cold Horror thrill'd our wounded Souls,
And thus we travell'd, pensive beyond measure,
Through Paths half cover'd with perplexing Thorns;
At length we found two Rows of aged Firs,
50 Whose Tops were blasted by unwholsom Winds.
This solitary *Vista* op'ning wide,
Disclos'd the Palace of its mournful Queen:
Before the Gate was plac'd a frightful Guard,
Who serv'd as Portes to the gloomy Dome:
55 Here Strech'd upon a miserable Couch,
Lay pining Sickness with continual Groans;

And by her Side, (array'd in filthy Weeds)
 Sat quaking Poverty with ghastly stare:
 His Presence seem'd to aggravate her Pain,
 60 For when she cast her languid Eyes on him,
 She hid her Face and rais'd a fearful Cry.
 There Disappointment like a Statue stood,
 With Eyes dejected and wit a Visage pale:
 Her heaving Bosom seem'd to swell with Anguish,
 65 And in her Hand she grasp'd a broken Reed;
 Here, in the Garb of Piety, we saw
 Proud Error frowning with a Look severe:
 Doubt at his Elbow bore a rod of Snakes,
 And held a Cup fill'd to the Brim with Tears,
 70 By these we pass'd into the dusky Court,
 O'er-run with Hemlock and with gloomy Fern:
 Perpetual Night hung o'er the dismal Walls,
 And from the Ground unhealthy Vapours rose;
 Through folding Doors of Ebony we came,
 75 Into a winding Passage hung with black,
 For ever dark - possess'd by flitting Shades,
 By waking Fancies, and by frightful Dreams.
 This led to a subterraneous Cell,
 Where the sad Empress *Melancholy* reign'd;
 80 The Musing Matron sat upon a Throne
 Of mould'ring Earth - her Footstole of the same;
 And for her Canopy an aged Yew
 Spread o'er her Head its venerable Arms:
 Her careless Robe was of sable Hue,
 85 And on her Shoulders flow'd her slighted Hair:
 Her Lips were clos'd with an eternal Silence;
 Her Arms were folded and her Head reclin'd ;
 On either Side her pale Attendants stood,
 Two mournful Maids, Dejection and Despair;
 90 the first (attended with continual Faintings)
 Seem'd on the Point to close her dying Eyes:
 A constant Dew hung on her death-like Brow,
 And her cold Bosom half forgot to heave.
 Despair (whose Garments by herself were torn)
 95 Was mark'd with Wounds that Time can never heal:
 With des'prate Hand she struck her bleeding Breast,
 And wash'd the Grounds with never-ceasing Tears;
 With ghastly Figures was the Cave adorn'd,
 And in the midst the Effegies of Death.
 100 Shock'd at the Place we hasted to return,
 And left the horrid Mansion far behind;
 Long time we travell'd through untrodden Paths,
 Where the brown Forests cast an awful Gloom:
 At length the floating Clouds began to part,
 105 And left behind them Streaks of chearful Azure;
 Our Path grew smooth and widen'd to view,
 until it open'd into a spacious Field;
 A Field whose Charms no Painter e'er cou'd reach,
 Though he shou'd borrow from the Poet's Heav'n;
 110 The Clime was temp'rate and the Air was still,
 The sprouting Turf was of a beauteous Green,
 Speckled with Flow'rs of a delicious Dye.
 Here crystal Lakes were border'd round with Trees,

- Where Blossoms flourish'd in eternal Spring;
 115 For here the Groves no blasting Tempest know,
 But still are blest with Fruits that ne'er decay:
 Perpetual Sun-shine crown'd with gaudy Hills,
 And the fair Vallies were with Plenty gay.
 A Path there was, trod o'er the spicy Field,
 120 Which led the Wand'rer to a blissful Shade,
 Whose Fence was made of balmy Eglantine;
 Where the fair Plane o'erlook'd the Myrtle Shrub,
 And flow'ring Orange that perfume the Air;
 Here flew in Throngs the soft aerial Choir,
 125 Whose glitt'ring Necks like polish'd Amber shone:
 We pass'd delighted through ambrosial Paths,
 And Bowers move with Jessamine and Rose;
 Joy seiz'd the ravish'd Spirits, while we breath'd
 In Gales that tasted of immortal Sweets.
 130 At length the parting Tree broke into Form,
 And with a Circle bound a charming Plain,
 I'th'midst of which upon an Iv'ry Throne
 Sat Chearfulness, the Genius of the Place.
 Her Mien was graceful and her Features fair;
 135 Continual Smiles dwelt on her dimpl'd Cheeks,
 Her Hair was bound beneath a shining Crown,
 Here Robes were Azure bright with golden Stars,
 And in her Hand she held a silver Lute.
 On either Side her royal Sisters sat,
 140 Both lovely, as herself, tho' not so gay;
 The eldest had a Face divinely fair;
 Calm was her Look, with Lips prepar'd for smiling,
 She often rais'd her thankful Eyes to Heav'n,
 Her Form was easy and her Name *Content*:
 145 The other (much the youngest) was array'd
 In Virgin Robes white as unsully'd Snow;
 Her thoughtless Smiles wou'd tame a Tiger's Rage;
 A Lamb (whose Neck was circl'd with a Band
 Of new blown Roses) at her Feet was laid,
 150 A milk-white Dove upon her Hand she bore:
 Thus ever blest sat *Innocence* the fair.
 Behind these Sisters stood a shining Train,
 As Maids of Honour to the Royal Fair:
Prosperity (the first) was climbing up
 155 A stately Pyramid of painted Marble;
 From whose high Top she reach'd a brilliant Crown:
 Then with an Air that spoke a joyful Heart,
 Look'd down with Pleasure on the Plain below.
 Gay *Wealth* the next, in her embroider'd Vest,
 160 Shone like the Entrails of the eastern Mine;
 Her Hair was platted thick with sparkling Gems,
 And in her Hand she bore a golden Wand.
 Health, like a Sylvan Huntress cloath'd in Green,
 In her right Hand a dappled Palfry held,
 165 Her Air was masculine, and swift her Motion;
 A Wreath of Flow'rs just ravish'd from her Meads,
 Bound up the Ringlets of her sable Hair,
 Her Cheeks were ruddy; and her large black Eyes
 Confess'd the Vigour of her sprightly Soul.
 170 These were the Natives of this happy Land,

The Sight of whom so fill'd my glowing Breast
With Ecstasy that I awoke: And thus
Their Glories vanish'd, and were seen no more.

(From: Mary Leapor: *The Works of Mary Leapor*. Ed. Richard Greene and Ann Messenger.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 81-86.)

Mary Chudleigh, "On the Death of the Duke of Gloucester"

1.

I'll take my Leave of Business, Noise and Care,
 And trust this stormy Sea no more:
 Condemn'd to Toil, and fed with Air,
 I've often sighing look'd towards the Shore:
 5 And when the boisterous Winds did cease,
 And all was still, and all was Peace,
 Afraid of Calms, and flatt'ring Skies,
 On the deceitful Waves I fixt my eyes,
 And on a sudden saw the threatening Billows rise:
 10 Then tremb'ling beg'd the Pow'rs Divine,
 Some little safe Retreat might be forever mine:
 O give, I cry'd, where e'er you please,
 Those Gifts which Mortals prize,
 Grown fond of Privacy and Ease,
 15 I now the gaudy Pumps of Life despise.
 Still let the Greedy strive with Pain,
 T'augment their shining Heaps of Clay;
 And punish'd with the Thirst of Gain,
 Their Honour lose, their Conscience stain:
 20 Let th'ambitious Thrones desire
 And still with guilty hast aspire;
 Thro' Blood and Dangers force their Way,
 And o'er the World extend their Sway,
 While I my time to nobler Uses give,
 25 And to my Books, and Thoughts entirely live;
 Those dear Delights, in which I still shall find
 Ten thousand Joys to feast my Mind,
 Joys, great as Sense can bear, from all its Dross refin'd.

2.

The Muse well pleas'd, my choice approv'd,
 30 And led me to the Shades she lov'd:
 To Shades, like those first fam'd Abodes
 Of happy Men, and rural Gods;
 Where, in the World's blest Infant State,
 When all in Friendship were combin'd
 35 And all were just, and all were kind;
 E're glitt'ring Show'rs, dipers'd by Jove,
 And Gold were made the Price of Love,
 The Nymphs and Swains did bless their Fate,
 And all their mutual Joys relate,
 40 Danc'd and sung, and void of Strife.
 Enjoy'd all Harmless Sweets of Life;
 While on their tuneful Reeds their Poets play'd,
 And their chast Loves to future Times convey'd.

3.

Cool was the place, and quiet as my Mind,
 45 The Sun cou'd there no Entrance find:
 No ruffling Winds the Boughs did move:
 The Waters gently crept along,
 As with their flowry Banks in Love:
 The Birds with soft harmonious Strains,
 50 Did entertain my Ear;
 Sad *Philomela* sung her Pains,
 Express'd her Wrongs, and her Despair;

I listen'd to her mournful Song,
 The charming Warbler pleas'd,
 55 And I, me thought, with new Delight was seiz'd:
 Her Voice with tender'st Passions fill'd my Breast,
 And I felt Raptures not to be express'd;
 Raptures, till that soft Hour unknown,
 My Soul seem'd from my Body flown:
 60 Vain World, said I, take, take my last adieu,
 I'll to my self, and to my Muse be true,
 And never more phantastick Forms pursue:
 Such glorious Nothings let the Great adore,
 Let them their airy *Juno's* court,
 65 I'll be deceiv'd no more;
 Nor to the Marts of Fame resort:
 From this dear Solitude no more remove;
 But her confine my, Joy, my Hope, my Love.

4.

Thus were my Hours in Extasies employ'd,
 70 And I the secret Sweets of Life enjoy'd:
 Serene, and calm, from every Pressure free,
 Inslav'd alone by flatt'ring Poesie:
 But Oh! how pleasing did her Fetters prove!
 How much did I, th' endearing Charmer Love!
 75 No former Cares durst once my Soul molest,
 No past Unkindness discompos'd my Breast;
 All was forgot, as if in *Lethe's* Stream
 I'd quench'd my Thirst, the past was all a Dream:
 But as I pleas'd my self with this unenvy'd state,
 80 Behold! a wondrous Turn of Fate!
 A hollow Melancholy Sound
 Dispers'd an awful Horror round,
 And hideous Groans thro' all the Grove resound
 Nature the dismal Sound did hear,
 85 Nature her self did seem to fear:
 The bleating Flocks lay trembling on the Plains;
 The Brooks ran Murmuring by,
 And Echo to their Murmurs made reply:
 The lofty Trees their verdant Honours shake;
 90 The frightened Birds with hast their Boughs forsake,
 And for securer Seats to distant Groves repair.
 The much wrong'd *Philomel* durst now no more
 Her former Injuries deplore;
 Forgot were all her moving Strains
 95 Forgot each sweet melodious Air;
 The weaker Passion, Grief, surrendered to her Fear.

5.

A sudden Gloom its dusky Empire spread,
 And I was seiz'd with an unusual dread:
 Where e'er I look'd, each Object brought affright:
 100 And I cou'd only mournful Accents hear,
 Which from th' adjacent Hills did wound my Ear;
 Th' adjacent Hills the gen'ral Horror share:
 Amaz'd I sat, depriv'd of all Delight,
 The Muse was fled, fled ev'ry pleasing Thought,
 105 And in their Room were black Ideas brought,
 By busie Fear, and active Fancy wrought.

At length the doleful Sound drew near,
 And lo, the British Genius did appear!
 Solemn his Pace,
 110 Dejected were his Eyes,
 And from his Breast thick thronging Sighs arise:
 The Tears ran down his venerable Face,
 And he with Lamentations loud fill'd all the sacred Place.

6.

He's Dead he cry'd! the young, the much belov'd!
 115 From us too soon, Ah! much too soon remov'd!
 Snatch'd hence in his first Dawn, his Infant Bloom!
 So fell *Marcellus* by a rigorous Doom.
 The Good, the Great, the Joy, the Pride of *Rome*!
 But Oh! he wants like him a *Maro* to rehearse
 120 His early worth in never dying Verse:
 To sing those rising Wonders which in him were seen;
 That Morning light which did it self display,
 Presaging earnest of a glorious Day;
 His Face was Charming, and his Make Divine,
 125 As if in him assembl'd did combine
 The num'rous Graces of his Royal Line:
 Such was *Ascanius* when from flaming *Troy*
 Pious *Aeneas* led the lovely Boy,
 And such was the God whento the *Tyrian* Queen
 130 A welcom guest he came;
 And in his Shape carress'd th' illustrious Dame
 And kindled in her Breast the inauspicious Flame.

7.

But this, alas! was but th' exterior part;
 For the chief Beauties were within:
 135 There Nature shew'd her greatest Art,
 And did a Master-piece begin:
 But ah! the Strokes were much too fine,
 Too delicate to last:
 Sweet was his Temper, generous his Mind,
 140 And much beyond his Years, to Martial Arts inclin'd:
 Averse to Softness, and for one so young,
 His Sense was manly, and his Reason strong:
 What e'er was taught him he would learn so fast
 As if t' was his design
 145 When he to full Maturity was grown,
 Th'applauding World amaz'd should find
 What e'er was worthy to be known,
 He with the noblest Toil had early made his own.

8.

Such, such was he, whose Loss I now lament;
 150 O Heav'n! why was this matchless Blessing sent!
 Why bust just shewn, and then, our Grief to raise,
 Cut off in the beginning of his Days!
 Had you beheld th'afflicted Royal Pair
 Stand by the Bed, where the dear Suff'rer lay
 155 To his Disease a helpless Prey,
 And seen them gaze on the sad doubtful Strife,
 Between contending Death, and struggling Life,
 Observ'd those Passions which their Souls did move,

160 Those kind Effects of tender'st Love;
 Seen how their Joys a while did strive
 To keep their fainty Hopes alive,
 But soon alas! were forc'd to yield
 To Grief and dire Despair,
 The short contested Field:
 165 And them in that curst Moment view'd,
 When by prevailing Death subdu'd,
 Breathless and pale, the beauteous Vicim lay,
 When his unwilling Soul was forc'd away
 From that lov'd Body which it lately blest,
 170 That Mansion worthy so divine a Guest,
 You must have own'd, no Age could ever show
 A sadder Sight, a Scene of vaster Woe.

9.

Sorrow like theirs, what Language can express?
 Their All was lost, their only Happiness!
 175 The good *Ægeus* could not more be griev'd
 When he the Sable Flag perceiv'd,
 Than was the Prince; but we this difference find,
 The last was calmer, more resign'd,
 And had the stronger, more Majestick Mind:
 180 He knew Complaints could give him no Relief,
 And therefore cast a Veil upon his sullen Grief;
 Th'afflicted Princess could not thus controul
 The tender Motions of her troubled Soul:
 Unable to resist, she gave her Sorrows way,
 185 And did the Dictates of her Grief obey:
 Maternal Kindness still does preference claim,
 And always burns with a more ardent Flame:
 But sure no Heart was ever thus opprest,
 The Load is much too great to bear;
 190 In sad Complaints are all her Minutes spent,
 And she lives only to lament:
 All soft Delights are Strangers to her Breast:
 His unexpected Fate does all her Thoughts ingross,
 And she speaks nothing but her mighty Loss.
 195 So mourn'd *Andromache* when she beheld
Astyanax expos'd to lawless Pow'r,
 Precipitated from a lofty Tow'r:
 Depriv'd of Life the Royal Youth remian'd
 And with the richest *Trojan* Blood the Pavement stain'd:
 200 Speechless she gaz'd, and by her Grief impell'd,
 Fearless amidst the *Græcian* Troops she run,
 And to her panting Bosom clasp'd her mangl'd Son.

10.

As thus he spoke *Britannia* did appear,
 Attended by a Sylvan Throng,
 205 And with her brought the River Nymphs along:
 He's dead! he's dead! the Genius loudly cry'd,
 On whose dear Life you did so much depend,
 He's dead, He's dead, she mournfully reply'd:
 Heav'n would not long the mighty Blessing lend:
 210 Some envious Pow'r, who does my Greatness fear,
 Foreseeing if he shou'd to Manhood live,
 He'd glorious Proof of wondrous Valor give:

To distant Lands extend his Sway
 And teach remotest Nations to obey:
 215 Resolv'd no pow'r ful Art his Life should save,
 Nor I should longer my lov'd *Gloucester* have.
 No more they said, but to their Sighs gave way,
 The Nymphs and Swains all griev'd no less than they.
 He's dead! he's dead! they weeping said;
 220 In his cold Tomb the lovely Youth is laid,
 And has too soon, alas! too soon the Laws of Fate obey'd.
 No more, no more shall he these Groves adorn,
 Nor more by him shall flow'ry Wreaths be worn:
 No more, no more we now on him shall gaze,
 225 No more divert him with our rural Lays,
 Nor see him with a godlike Smile receive our humble Praise.
 Their loud Laments the Nereids hear,
 And full of Grief, and full of Fear,
 Their watry Bed in hast forsake;
 230 And from their Locks the pearly Moisture shake:
 All with one Voice the much lov'd Youth lament,
 And in pathetic Strains their boundless Sorrow vent.

11.

Upon the Ground I pensive lay;
 Complain'd and wept as much as they:
 235 My Country's Loss became my own,
 And I was void of Comfort grown.
 He's dead! he's dead! with them I cry'd,
 And to each Sight, each Groan reply'd.
 The *Thracian* Bard was nor more mov'd,
 240 When he had lost the Fair he lov'd;
 When looking back to please his Sight
 With all that did his Soul delight,
 He saw her sink int' everlasting Night.
 The Sorrows of the Princess pierc'd my Heart,
 245 And I, me thought, felt all her Smart:
 I wish'd I cou'd allay her Pain,
 Or part of her Affliction share;
 But Oh! such Wishes are in vain,
 She must alone the pond'rous Burthen bear.
 250 O Fate unjust! I then did cry,
 Why must the young, the virtuous die!
 Why in their Prime be snatch'd away,
 Like beauteous Flow'rs which soon decay,
 while Weeds enjoy the Warmth of each succeeding Day?

12.

255 While I thus mourn'd, a sudden Light the Place o'er spread
 Back to their genuine Night the frightened Shadows fled:
 Dilating Skies disclos'd a brighter Day,
 And for a glorious Form made way;
 For the fam'd Guardian of our Isle:
 260 The wondrous Vision did with Pomp descend,
 With awful State his kind Approaches made,
 And thus with an obliging Smile
 To the much griev'd *Britannia* said,
 No more, my lov'd Charge, no more
 265 Your time in useless Sorrows spend;
 He's blest whose Loss you thus deplore:

Above he lives a Life Divine,
 And does with dazzling Splendor shine:
 I met him on th' Ætheral Shore,
 270 With Joy did I th' illustrious Youth embrace,
 And led him to his God-like Race,
 Who sit inthron'd in wondrous State,
 Above the Reach of Death or fate:
 The *Caledonian* Chiefs were there,
 275 Who thro' the World have spread their Fame,
 And justly might immortal Trophies claim:
 A long Descent of glorious Kings,
 Who did, and suffer'd mighty things:
 With them the *Danish* Heroes were,
 280 Who long had ancient Kingdoms sway'd,
 And been by Warlike States obey'd:
 With them they did their Honours share,
 With them refulgent Crowns did wear,
 From all their Toils at length they cease,
 285 Blest with the Sweets of everlasting Peace.

13.

Among the rest, that beauteous suff'ring Queen
 Who'd all the turns of adverse Fortune see;
 Robb'd of a Crown, and forc'd to mourn in Chains,
 And on a Scaffold end her num'rous Pains
 290 Receiv'd him with a cheerful Look,
 And to her Arms her dearest Off-spring took:
 Next came the martyr'd Prince, who liv'd to know
 The last Extremities of woe:
 Expos'd unjustly to his People's hate,
 295 He felt the Rigor of remorseless Fate.
 Virtue and spotless Innocence,
 Alas! are no Defence:
 They rather to the Rage expose
 Of bloody and relentless Foes:
 300 Too fierce they shine, too glaring bright,
 The Vicious cannot bear the Light.
 Next came his Son, who long your Sceptre sway'd,
 And whom his Subjects joyfully obey'd;
 The last of all the fair *Maria* came,
 305 Who lately grac'd the *British* Throne;
 And there with a reviving Splendor shone,
 But made a short, a transient Stay,
 By Death from all her glories snatch'd away:
 How vain is Beauty, Wealth, or Fame,
 310 How few the Trophies of a boasted Name!
 Death can't be brib'd, be won by none:
 To Slaves and Kings a Fate a like, a like Regard is shown.

14.

All these the lovely Youth carest,
 and welcom'd him to their eternal Rest:
 315 Welcome, they said, to this our blissful Shore,
 To never ending Joys, and Seats Divine,
 To Realms where clear unclouded Glories shine,
 Here you may safely stand and hear the Billows roar,
 But shall be toss'd on that tempestuous Sea no more:
 320 No more shall grieve, no more complain,

But free from Care, and free from Pain,
 With us for ever shall remain.
 While thus they spoke, celestial Musick play'd,
 And welcom! welcom! every Angel said:
 325 With eager hast their Royal Guest they crown'd,
 While welcom! welcom! echo'd all around,
 And fill'd th' Ætheral Court with the loud cheerful Sound.

15.

He said; and to superior joys return'd;
Britannia now no longer mourn'd:
 330 No more the Nymphs, no more the Swains,
 With Lamentations fill'd the Plains.
 The Muse came back, and with her brought
 Each sprightly, each delightful Thought:
 Kindly she raised me from the Ground,
 335 And smiling wip'd my Tears away:
 While Joy, she said, is spread around,
 And do's thro' all the Grove resound,
 Will you to Grief a Tribute pay,
 And mourn for one who's far more blest,
 340 Than those that are of Crowns possess?
 No more, no more you must complain,
 But with *Britannia* now rejoice:
Britannia to the Choir above
 Will add her charming Voice:
 345 Not one of her beauteous Train
 But will obsequious prove;
 And each will try who best can sing,
 Who can the highest Praises bring;
 Who best describe his happy State,
 350 And best his present Joys relate.
 Hark! Hark! the Birds are come again,
 And each new renews his sweet melodious Strain.
 Clear is the Skie, and bright the Day,
 Among the Boughs sweet Zephyrs play,
 355 And all are pleas'd, and all are gay.
 And dare you still your Grief express,
 As if you wish'd his Honours less,
 And with an envious Eye beheld his Happiness?

16.

Ah! cruel Muse, with Sighs I said,
 360 Why do you thus your Slave upbraid?
 I neither at hiss Bliss repine;
 Nor is't my choice disobey:
 Your Will, you know, has still been mine;
 And I would now my ready def'rence pay:
 365 Bot oh! in vain I strive, in vain I try,
 While my lov'd Princess grieves, I can't comply:
 Her tears forbid me to rejoice,
 And when my Soul is on the Wing,
 And I would with *Britannia* sing,
 370 Her Sighs arrest my Voice.
 But if once more you'd have me cheerful prove,
 And with your Shades again in Love,
 Strive by your Charms to calm her troubled Mind;
 Let her the Force of pow'rful Numbers find:

375 And by the Magick of your Verse restore
 Her former Peace, then add Delights unknown before
 Let her be blest, my Joys will soon return,
 But while she grieves, I ne'er can cease to mourn.

(From: Mary Chudleigh: *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*. Ed. Margaret J.M. Ezell. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 47-59.)

**Mary Chudleigh, "On the Death of my Honoured Mother Mrs. Lee: A Dialogue
between *Lucinda* and *Marissa*"**

Lucinda. What, my *Marissa*, has *Lucinda* done,
That thus her once lov'd Company you shun?
Why is't from her you thus unkindly fly,
From her, who for your Sake cou'd freely die?
5 Who knows no Joy but what your Sight does give,
And in your Heart alone desires to live?
I beg you by that Zeal I've shewn for you,
That Tenderness which is to Friendship due,
By those dear sacred Bonds our Souls have ty'd,
10 Those Bonds, which Death it self shall ne'er divide;
By what so e'er you love, or I can name,
To let me know from whence this wond'rous Strangeness came.
Remember by your Vows you're wholly mine,
And I to you did all my Thoughts resign:
15 My Joy was yours, and yours was all my Grief;
In your lov'd bosom still I sought Relief:
When you were chearful, I was truly blest,
And now your Sorrow deeply wounds my Breast:
I view it thro' the thin Disguise you wear,
20 And spite of all your Caution, all your Care,
Hear ev'ry rising Sigh, and view each falling Tear.

Marissa. Permit me, dear *Lucinda*, to complain,
That your Unkindness do's augment my Pain:
How could you think that one who lov'd like me
25 Would ever let you share her Misery?
To see you mourn would bring me no Relief,
No, that would rather double my Grief:
For Love's a Passion of the noblest kind,
And when 'tis seated in a gen'rous Mind,
30 'Twill be from mean Designs and Interest free
Not interrupt a Friend's Felicity
Had I been happy, with a smiling Face,
I long e'er now had run to your Embrace,
And in your Arms been eager to relate
35 The welcom Favours of propitious Fate:
But since ill Fortune do's me still pursue,
O let my Griefs remain unknown to you.
Free from sad Thoughts may you for ever live,
And all of your Hours to Mirth and Pleasure give:
40 May no Concern for me your Peace molest;
O let me live a Stranger to your Breast:
No more, no more my worthless Name repeat,
Abandon me to this obscure Retreat;
Make haste from hence, my Sight will damp your Joy,
45 And the blest Calmness of your Soul destroy.

Lucinda. Think not I'll leave you to your Grief's a Prey:
No! here with you I will for ever stay,
And weep with you my coming Hours away:
Return each Sigh, and ev'ry moving Groan,
50 And to repeating Echo's make my Moan,
And tell them how unkind my lov'd *Marissa*'s grown.

- Marissa*. To banish all Suspicions from your Mind,
 And that you may not think me still unkind,
 I'll let you know the Cause that makes me mourn,
 55 The Cause that does my Joy to Sorrow turn:
 But oh! a Loss so vast, so vastly great,
 Who can without a Flood of Tears repeat!
 It much too strong for my Resolves does prove,
 And do's my tend'rest, softest Passion move:
 60 Disturbs the Peace, the quiet of my Mind,
 And for some Minutes makes me less resign'd:
 I to my Reason willingly would yield,
 But struggling Nature keeps by Force the Field;
 Compel'd, I stoop to her imperious Sway,
 65 And thus each hour, methinks, I hear her say,
 Wretch'd *Marissa*! all thy Comfort's fled,
 And all thy Joy with thy lov'd Mother dead:
 A Mother, who with ev'ry Grace was blest,
 With all the Ornaments of Virtues dress'd;
 70 With whatso'er religion recommends;
 The best of Wives, of Mothers, and of Friends.
 And should not such a Loss Complaints inspire?
 Their Apathy let Stoicks still admire,
 And strict Obedience to their Rules require:
 75 And on morose, ill-natur'd, thoughtless Fools,
 Impose the rigid Notions of their Schools:
 Insensibility were here a Fault,
 And 'tis a Doctrine which I never taught:
 Tears are becoming, and a Tribute due
 80 To one so worthy, and so dear to you.
 By her thus urg'd, I gave my Sorrow way,
 And did the Dictates of my Grief obey:
 In this Recess, remote from Human Kind,
 I thought, I shou'd not Interruption find:
 85 Most mind themselves, the Absent are forgot;
 And this had doubtless been *Marissa's* Lot,
 Had not the kind *Lucinda's* tender Care
 Sought out this Asylum of Despair,
 And brought her hither all my Woes to share.
- 90 *Lucinda*. Such as have heard of good *Philinda's* Name,
 Cannot with Justice sad *Marissa* blame:
 A Mother's Loss, and such a Mother too,
 Can't my dear Friend, but be deplor'd by you.
 All you cou'd wish she was, as Angels kind,
 95 As Nature lib'ral, of a God-like Mind;
 Steady as Fate, and constant in her Love,
 On whom no Wrongs, nor yet Affronts cou'd move
 To mean Revenge, or a malicious Thought:
 She liv'd those Truths her holy Faith had taught:
 100 Joy could not raise, nor Grief depress her Mind,
 She still was calm, sedate, and still resign'd.
- Marissa*. Yes, she was more, much more than you can name.
 Cheerful, obliging, gen'rous, still the same:
 The Good she prais'd, the Absent did defend,
 105 And was to the Distress a constant Friend:
 Full of Compassion, and from Censure free,

And of a most extensive Charity:
 With winning Sweetness she did still persuade,
 And her Reproofs were prudently convey'd:
 110 In softest Language she'd the Vicious blame,
 And non e'er lov'd with a more ardent Flame:
 Her Friends Concerns she kindly made her own.
 For them the greatest Care, her chief Regard was shown:
 At no Misfortune she did e'er repine,
 115 But still submitted to the Will Divine:
 No discontented Thoughts disturb'd her Breast,
 What ever happen'd, she still thought was best:
 When her last Sickness came, that dire Disease
 Which did on her with sudden Fury seize,
 120 With utmost Rage the Fort of Life assail,
 Resolv'd by racking Tortures to prevail;
 O with what Patience did she bear her Pain,
 And all th' Attacks of cruel death sustain!
 The dreadful Ill could not molest her Mind,
 125 There she did still a happy Calmness find,
 A well fixt Pleasure, a substantial Joy,
 Serenity which nothing could destroy,
 Sweet Antepast of what she finds above,
 Where she's now blest with what she most did love;
 130 That sov'reign Good which did her Soul inflame,
 And whose Fruition was her utmost Aim;
 And in whose Prsence she do's now possess
 A long desir'd, and endless Happiness.

135 *Lucinda.* Since she from all the Pains of Life is free,
 And in Possession of Felicity,
 'Tis unbecoming such a Grief to show,
 As can from nothing but ungovern'd Passion flow.

Marissa. 'Tis, I confess, a Fault; but who can part
 From one she loves, without a bleeding Heart?

140 *Lucinda.* 'Tis hard, I own, and yet it may be done;
 Such glorious Victories are sometimes won:
 Time will at length the greatest Grief subdue,
 And shall not Reason do the same for you?
 Reason, which shou'd our Actions always guide,
 145 And o'er our Words, and o'er our Thoughts preside:
 Passions should never that ascendant gain,
 They were for Service made, and not to reign:
 Yet do not think i your past Sorrow blame,
 Were the Loss mine, sure, I shou'd do the same,
 150 But having paid the Debt to Nature due,
 No more the Dictates of my Grief pursue.
 From the dark Grave where he lov'd Body lies,
 Raise, my *Marissa*, your dejected Eyes,
 And view her Soul ascending to the Skies,
 155 By Angels guarded, who in charming Lays,
 Sing as they mount, their great Creator's Praise;
 And to celestial Seats their Charge convey,
 To never ending Bliss, and never ending Day:
 And is't not cruel, or at least unkind
 160 To wish that she were still to earth confin'd,

Still forc'd to bend beneath her Load of Clay?
Methinks, I hear the glorious Vision say,
What is't, *Marissa*, makes you still complain,
Are you concern'd that I am void of Pain,
165 And wou'd you have me wretched once again?
Have me t'exchange this Bliss for Toil and Fear,
And all these Glories for a Life of Care?
Or is't th' Effect of a too fond Desire,
Do's Love, mistaken Love, these Thoughts inspire?
170 Is it my Absence you so much deplore,
And do you grieve because I'm yours no more,
Because with me you can no more Converse,
No more repeat your wrongs, or tell me your distress,
no more by my Advice your Action steer,
175 And never more my kind Instructions hear?
If this do's cause your Grief, no more Complain;
'Twill not be long e'er we shall meet again;
Shall meet all Joy in these bright Realms of Love,
And never more the Pains of Absence prove:
180 Till that blest Time, with decent Calmness wait,
And bear unmov'd the Pressures of your Fate.

Marissa. Yes, my dear Friend, I your Advice will take,
Dry up my Tears, and these lov'd Shades forsake:
I can't resist, when Kindness leads the Way;
185 I'm wholly yours, and must your Call obey:
With you to hated Crouds and Noise I'll go,
And the best Proofs of my Affection show:
But what soe'er I am, my troubl'd Mind
Will still to my *Philinda* be confin'd;
190 Her Image is upon my Soul imprest,
She lives within, and governs in my Breast:
I'll strive to live those Virtues she has taught,
They shall employ my Pen, my tongue, my Thought:
Where e'er I go her Name my Theme shall prove,
195 And what soe'er I say, shall loudly speak my Love.

(From: Mary Chudleigh: *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*. Ed. Margaret J.M. Ezell. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 129-135.)

Mary Chudleigh, "On the Death of my Dear Daughter *Eliza Maria Chudleigh*: A Dialogue between *Lucinda* and *Marissa*"

- Marissa*. O my *Lucinda*! O my dearest friend!
 Must my Afflictions never, never End!
 Has Heav'n for me no Pity left in Store,
 Must I! O must I ne'er be happy more,
 5 *Philinda's* Loss had almost broke my Heart,
 From her, Alas! I did but lately part:
 And must there still be new Occasions found
 To try my Patience, and my Soul to wound?
 Must my lov'd Daughter too be snatch'd away,
 10 Must she so soon the Call of Fate obey?
 In her first Dawn, replete with youthful Charms,
 She's fled, she's fled from my deserted Arms.
 Long did she struggle, long the War maintain,
 But all th' Efforts of Life, alas! were in vain.
 15 Could Art have sav'd her she had still been mine,
 Both Art and Care together did combine,
 But what is Proof against the Will Divine!
 Methinks I still her dying Conflict view,
 And the sad Sight does all my Grief renew:
 20 Rack'd by Convulsive Pains she meekly lies,
 And gazes on me with imploring Eyes,
 With Eyes which beg Relief, but all in vain,
 I see, but cannot, cannot ease her Pain:
 She must the Burthen unassisted bear,
 25 I cannot with her in her Tortures share:
 Wou'd they were mine, and she stood easie by;
 For what one loves, sure 'twere not hard to die.
 See, how she labours, how she pants for Breath,
 She's lovely still, she's sweet, she's sweet in Death!
 30 Pale as she is, she beauteous does remain,
 Her closing Eyes their Lustre still retain:
 Like setting Suns, with undiminish'd Light,
 They hide themselves within the Verge of Night.
 She's gone! she's gone! she's sigh'd her Soul away!
 35 And can I!, can I any longer stay!
 My Life, alas! has ever tiresome been,
 And I few happy, easie Days have seen:
 But now it does a greater Burthen grow,
 I'll throw it off and no more Sorrow know,
 40 But with her to calm peaceful Regions go.
 Stay thou, dear Innocence, retard thy Flight.
 O stop thy Journey to the Realms of Light,
 Stay till I come: To thee I swiftly move,
 Attracted by the strongest Passion, Love.
- 45 *Lucinda*. No more, no more let me such Language here.
 I can't, I can't the piercing Accents bear:
 Each Word you utter stabs me to the Heart:
 I cou'd from Life, not from *Marissa* part:
 And were your Tenderness as great as mine,
 50 While I were left, you wou'd not thus repine.
 My Friends are Riches, Health, and all to me,
 And while they re mine, I cannot wretched be.

Marissa. If I on you cou'd Happiness bestow,
 I still the Toils of Life wou'd undergo,
 55 Wou'd still contentedly my Lot sustain,
 And never more of hard Fate complain:
 But since my Life to you will useless prove,
 O let me hasten to the Joys above:
 Farewel, farwel, take, take my last adieu,
 60 May Heav'n be more propitious still to you
 May you live happy when I'm in my Grave,
 and no Misfortunes, no Afflictions have:
 If to sad Objects you'll some Pity lend,
 And give a Sigh to an unhappy Friend,
 65 Think of *Marissa*, and her wretched State,
 How she's been us'd by her malicious Fate,
 Recount those Storms which she has long sustain'd,
 And then rejoice that she the Port has gain'd,
 The welcome Haven of eternal Rest,
 70 Where she shall be for ever, ever blest;
 And in her Mother's, and in her Daughter's Arms,
 Shall meet with new, with unexperienc'd Charms.
 O how I long those dear Delights to taste;
 Farwel, farwel; my Soul is much in haste.
 75 Come Death and give the kind releasing Blow;
 I'm tir'd with Life, and over-charg'd with Woe:
 In thy cool, silent, unmolested Shade,
 O let me be by their dear Relicks laid;
 And there with them from all my Troubles free,
 80 Enjoy the Blessings of a long Tranquility.

Lucinda. O thou dear Suff'rer, on my Breast recline
 Thy drooping Head, and mix thy Tears with mine:
 Here rest a while, and make a Truce with Grief,
 Consider; Sorrow brings you no Relief.
 85 In the great Play of Life we must not chuse,
 Nor yet the meanest Character refuse
 Like Soldiers we our Gen'ral must obey,
 Must stand our Ground, and to Fear give way,
 But go undaunted on till we have won the Day.
 90 Honour is ever the Reward of Pain,
 A lazy Virtue no Applause will gain,
 All such as to uncommon Heights would rise,
 And on the Wings of Fame ascend the Skies,
 Must learn the Gifts of Fortune to despise.
 95 They to themselves their Bliss must still confine,
 Must be unmov'd, and never once repine:
 But few to this Perfection can attain,
 Our Passions often will th' Ascendent gain,
 And Reason but alternately does reign;
 100 Disguis'd by Pride, we sometimes seem to bear
 A haughty Port, and scorn to shed a Tear;
 While Grief within still acts a tragick Part,
 And plays the Tyrant in the bleeding Heart.
 Your Sorrow is of the severest kind,
 105 And can't be wholly to your Soul confin'd:
 Losses like yours, may be allow'd to move
 A gen'rous Mind, that know what 'tis to love.
 Who that her innate Worth had understood,

110 Wou'd not lament a Mother so divinely good?
 And who, alas! without a Flood of Tears,
 Cou'd lose a Daughter in her blooming Years:
 An only Daughter, such a Daughter too,
 As did deserve to be belov'd by you;
 Who'd all that cou'd her to the World comment,
 115 A Wit that did her tender Age transcend,
 Inviting Sweetness, and a sprightly Air,
 Looks that had something pleasingly severe,
 The Serious and the Gay were mingl'd there:
 These merit all the Tears that you have shed,
 120 And could Complaints recall them for the Dead,
 Could Sorrow their dear Lives again restore,
 I here with you forever would deplore:
 But since th' intensest Grief will prove in vain,
 And these lost Blessings can't be yours again,
 125 Recal your wand'ring Reason to your Aid,
 And hear it calmly when it does persuade;
 'Twill teach you Patience, and the useful Skill
 To rule your Passions, and command your Will;
 To bear Afflictions with a steady Mind,
 130 Still to be easie, pleas'd, and still resign'd,
 And look as if you did no inward Trouble find.

Marissa. I know, *Lucinda*, this I ought to do,
 But oh! 'tis hard my Frailties to subdue:
 My Head-strong Passions will Resistance make,
 135 And all my firmest Resolutions shake:
 I for my Daughter's Death did long prepare,
 And I hope'd I shou'd the Stroke with Temper bear,
 But when it came, Grief quickly did prevail,
 And I soon found my boasted Courage fail:
 140 Yet still I strove, but 'twas, alas! in vain,
 My Sorrow did at length th' Ascendent gain:
 But I'm resolv'd I will no longer yield;
 By Reason led, I'll once more take the Field,
 And there from my insulting Passions try
 145 To gain a full, a glorious Victory:
 Which till I've done, I never will give o'er,
 But still fight on, and think of Peace no more;
 With an unweary'd Courage still contend,
 Till Death, or Conquest, does my Labour end.

(From: Mary Chudleigh: *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*. Ed. Margaret J.M. Ezell. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 135-139.)

**Mehetabel Wright, "To an Infant expiring the second day of its Birth. Written by
its Mother, in Imitation of NAMBY PAMBY"**

Tender softness, infant mild,
Perfect, purest, brightest child;
Transient lustre, beauteous clay,
Smiling wonder of a day:
5 E're the last convulsive start
Bends thy *unresisting* heart:
E'er the long enduing swoon
Weighs thy precious eye-lids down,
Oh regard a mother's moan,
10 Anguish deeper than thy own!
Fairest eyes, whose dawning light
Late with rapture blest my sight,
E're your orbs extinguish'd be,
Bend their trembling beams on me:
15 Drooping sweetness, verdant flow'r
Blooming, with'ring in an hour;
E're the gentle breast sustains
Latest, fiercest, vital pains
Hear a suppliant! Let me be
20 Partner in thy Destiny.

(From: *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1733: 542.)

**Elizabeth Boyd, "On an *Infant's* lying some Days unburied, for Want of Money,
the *Father* being absent and ill"**

WHEN tender *Mothers* lose a long-wish'd Heir,
They feel the poignant Tortures of *Despair*;
But oh! when *Poverty's* the Curse of *Fate*,
And shrouded *Babes* on Jilting *Fortune* wait,
5 The *Mother's Agonies* what can excel?
What can express, or what *Idea* tell?
Inhuman Shock! What Horrors rend the *Breast*?
When by distracting *Grief's* the *Soul's* deprest?
Where's *Fortitude* when Nature bleeds with Woe;
10 When *Friend's* forsake, and ebbing *Fortune's* low?
Unhappy Babe, no *Father* hail'd thy *Birth*,
Nor knew thou wast deny'd the Common *Earth*.
Absent and *ill*; for each the *Mother* bled,
The *Father* dying, the dear *Infant* dead;
15 Ten tedious *Days*, the melancholy Sight,
Drew *Tears*, that once gave *Raptures* of Delight.

(From: Elizabeth Boyd: *The Humorous Miscellany; Or, Riddles for the Beaux*. [...] London: [...], 1733. 24-25.)

Mehetabel Wright, "A Farewel to the World"

- While sickness rends this tenement of clay,
 Th' approaching change with rapture I survey;
 O'erjoy'd I reach the goal, with eager pace,
 E're tardy life has measur'd half its race.
- 5 Nor shall I droop, with sad old-age accurst
 Of all our plagues, the heaviest and the worst!
 No longer man's wayward taste to please,
 The hard constraint of seeming much at ease;
 Nor wear an outward smile, and look serene,
- 10 While ruin racks and tortures lurk within.
 Nor let me, partial grown to flesh and blood,
 Record the evil and forget the good;
 For both I'll humble adoration pay;
 And hail the Power that gives and takes away.
- 15 Long shall my faithful memory retain
 And oft recall the intervals of pain.
 Nay, to high heaven, for greater gifts I bend;
 Health I've enjoy'd, and I had once a friend.
 Above contempt a cheerful home I had:
- 20 This head was cover'd, and these limbs were clad.
 What pleasing toil amus'd the joyous day,
 I join'd the fair, the witty and the gay.
 Our labour sweet, if labour it might seem,
 Allowed the sportive and instructive scene.
- 25 Yet here no lewd or useless wit was found;
 We poiz'd the wav'ring sail with ballast sound.
 The evening crown'd the day by happy choice
 When all the sons of industry rejoice!
 Wit, mirth and music, sciences and arts,
- 30 Improv'd and exercis'd our mother [?]⁹⁰⁶ parts.
 There learning plac'd her richer stores in view,
 Or, wing'd her love, the minutes gaily flew!
 True merit might unequalled lustre wear
 For curious, base detraction came not there.
- 35 Nay, yet sublimer joy our bosom prov'd
 Divine benevolence, by heaven beloved.
 Wan meagre forms, torn from impending death,
 Exulting, blest us with reviving breath.
 The shiv'ring wretch we cloth'd, the mourner cheer'd,
- 40 And sickness ceas'd to groan when we appear'd.
 Unask'd, our care assists with tendrest art
 Their bodies, nor neglects the immortal part.
 Sometimes in shades unpierc'd by Cynthia's beam,
 Whose brightness glimmer'd on the dimpled stream,
- 45 We led the sprightly dance thro' sylvan scenes,
 Or bound like fairies o'er the level greens.
 To join the dance our blooming partner haste,
 With love forever sweet, forever chaste
 In ev'ry breast a gen'rous fervour glows:
- 50 [Missing line - no rhyme]
 Most fragrant herbage deck'd with orient dews,
 And flow'rets of a thousand various hues,

⁹⁰⁶ [nobler], see *The Christian's Magazine* Oct. (1762), p. 476.

By waiting gales the mingling odours fly,
And round our heads in vernal breezes sigh.
55 Whole nature seems to heighten and improve
The halcyon hours in innocence and love.
Youth, wit, good nature, candour, sense, combin'd
To serve delight, and civilize mankind;
In sylvan scenes, unrivall'd forms, we shone,
60 And glory'd in a Paradise our own:
In Wisdom's love we ev'ry heart engage,
And triumph to restore the Golden Age!
Now close the blissful theme, exhausted muse,
The latest blissful theme that thou shalt choose;
65 Sate with life, what joys for me remain,
Save one dear wish to balance ev'ry pain?
O'er whelm'd I write, fatal ills, and hopeless all,
On speedy Fate with earnest Cries I call.
So peevish babes, whose walking Hour is o'er,
70 When glitt'ring baubles can delight no more,
Recline the head, with sudden grief oppress,
Till borne by friendly Arms to welcome Rest.

(From: Elspeth Knights: "A 'Licentious' Daughter: Mehetabel Wesley, 1697-1750." *Women's Writings* 4.1 (1997): 21-22.)